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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

NATIVE WOMEN'S PERCEPTION OF AN ADULT UPGRADING PROGRAM

BY

CHRISTINE S. NESDOLY ©

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE
DEGREE OF
MASTER OF EDUCATION
IN
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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled **NATIVE WOMEN'S PERCEPTION OF AN ADULT UPGRADING PROGRAM** submitted by Christine S. Nesdoly in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education in Intercultural Education.

....
Dr. Marilyn Assheton-Smith

....
Dr. Anne-Marie Decore

Beth Young
....
Dr. Beth Young

....
Dr. Barbara Spronk

March 3, 1993

Phoenix

From the first day, I watched you struggle,
determined furrow between
closed-off eyes
not good enough—

I read your fears, so neatly cramped
within the safe pink margins and
soft blue lines
not good enough—

One time I glimpsed a part of you,
that murky, painful shadow-past
the bleakness of
not good enough—

And then I heard the fledgling Voice
a whisper first, a timid sound
the briefest pause
it gathered strength
shook loose the ashes, rising proud
that Voice is heard and
you
are
born.

ABSTRACT

Native women who return to school for upgrading courses on a reserve have different expectations and perceptions than the administrators and instructors. To the instructors, the purpose of the Adult Academic Upgrading Program (AAUP) on the reserve is to prepare adults for post-secondary education in non-Native institutions. However, the majority of adults who complete AAUP do not continue their education after graduating from the program. In order to discover the meaning the women ascribe to their upgrading experience, the twenty women who were enrolled in the upgrading program on an Alberta reserve in 1988 and 1989, were contacted. The primary focus of this study was to determine whether they felt AAUP was worthwhile and whether it had been a positive experience.

In addition to the interviews with seven women, questionnaire responses from two other women have also been incorporated. Attendance statistics have been obtained from the AAUP program coordinator, and essays and poetry which the women wrote as English assignments for AAUP are included. Because of the author's personal relationship with the women involved in this study, additional information obtained from telephone conversations and informal social contact has been added to the women's profiles.

An analysis of the data reveals that although the women have not fulfilled the expectations of the AAUP instructors and administrators by continuing their post-secondary studies in pursuit of a profitable career, all of them feel that AAUP was worthwhile as a learning experience, and most of the women affirm positive changes in themselves and in their family relationships. In addition, there has been a noticeable impact on the entire community as a result of the women's upgrading experience. For them, the most important part of upgrading is not accumulated academic knowledge, but rather the opportunity to socialize with other adults, to gain self-confidence, to learn tolerance and respect for other Band members and "to have something to do every day". In order to provide effective educational opportunities for adult Native women, it is

important for educators to understand the significance of these non-academic outcomes — to realize that they are not necessarily educating the women with facts for college, but with *concepts for life*.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

As a second generation Canadian, I was raised in a home where education was a priority. My grandfather, who finished grade four in the public school system, encouraged and supported his son through a doctoral degree in History, and my father has continued this family tradition in his moral and financial support of my academic endeavours. His scholarship, love of knowledge, and joy in teaching have always been an inspiration to me and without his love and collegial respect, this thesis could not have been written.

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And a special thanks to Tracey, Tanya, Kim, Cassandra, Meeka, Blue Stone, Moon, Janet, Linda, Bonnie and especially Phoenix, who have shared their lives with me.

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CHAPTER 1

METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

Introduction

In the past ten years, college-sponsored upgrading programs have been established on many Alberta reserves, allowing Band members to continue their interrupted schooling as adults in a non-threatening, easily accessible context (Trussler 1971; Moore-Eyman 1984a). While many adult Native women have taken advantage of this opportunity for academic upgrading, the majority do not pursue post-secondary education off the reserve upon successful completion of the program. Does this mean that the program has failed to provide the necessary preparation or counselling to ensure that the women continue their education?

As an instructor in such a reserve program, I wondered if the women's perception of their upgrading experience was a positive one, even though most of them did not use it as the transition or 'stepping stone' for which it was intended.

In order for educators of Native adults to avoid feeling frustrated or pessimistic about the usefulness of providing on-reserve programs, it is necessary to view the experience from the students' perspective. If there is no obvious benefit to these women from the acquisition of procedural knowledge of the academic content, are there peripheral aspects of the program that are of value to the students? In other words, do the women value the opportunity to increase their cultural capital (Bourdieu & Passeron 1979) as a result of new experiences provided through field trips, guest speakers, films, workshops and reading course material? Do they grow and change personally as they interact in a secure and nurturing environment where shared experiences provide a bond that allows a new freedom to explore opinions and alternative points of view?

According to LeCompte and Goetz (1984), educational ethnography examines the process of learning

> and the sociocultural contexts within which nurturing, teaching and learning occur...document[ing] the lives of individual teachers, students and administrators for unique and common patterns of experience, outlook and response (p.31).

Consequently, the decision to approach the research question applying an ethnographic design seemed appropriate. I wanted to explore the meaning Native women attach to their experience in an adult upgrading program on a reserve. Therefore, the following three questions guided my inquiry:

1. How do the women feel about their experience in the upgrading program?
2. Was the academic achievement as valuable as the personal growth they may have experienced?
3. How do the women feel about the direction their lives have taken since completing the upgrading program?

In this chapter, I will discuss the nature of the study I have undertaken and its significance in the field of educational research. The Adult Academic Upgrading Program (AAUP) will be described in order to establish a context for the research involving women graduates. The participants and sampling procedure will be presented, followed by an explanation of the research process, which will include data collection, ethical considerations and data analysis.

Nature of the Study

As the research question I proposed addressed the meanings the women themselves attributed to the program, numerical data reflecting factors such as academic achievement and demographic profiles, or other statistics of the program, would not have helped me find an answer. Qualitative methods were clearly indicated. I needed to obtain detailed descriptive accounts from the participants so I could understand how they valued academic upgrading and discover the experience through their eyes.

> The meanings which the ethnographer seeks to discover may be implicit, not explicit. They may not lie in individual items (words, objects, person) that can be talked about but in connections that can only gradually be discerned (Hymes 1982:2).

In this article, Hymes (1982) also stresses the need for a holistic approach to research so that the participants' observations may be seen in the context of their life experiences.

Spradley (1979) observes that an ethnographer must begin with a naive ignorance, approaching the participants as a student/learner wanting to describe and understand the native point of view. However, this approach was difficult to take in my interviews because the women assumed that I already knew the answers to the questions as a result of my relationship with them as an instructor in AAUP. I explained to them that, given the nature of my questions, they were the experts because I could only understand the upgrading experience from the instructor's perspective. I needed their help to learn about the same experience from their point of view.

Significance of the Study

The litany of injustices with regard to Indian education in Canada has been well-documented and criticized. The theme has been assimilation or acculturation toward the goal of integrating Natives into the dominant society; disintegration of Indian cultural identity has been the consequence. The appalling failure to meet the needs of Native Canadian students by both federally and provincially operated schools has led to alarmingly high drop out rates, especially at the secondary level. Although the number of Native students in secondary schools has steadily increased in the past decade, the number of Indians who complete grade twelve is still less than one-quarter of the national rate (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada 1990). Without a high school diploma, Natives are ill-equipped to compete in the work place, forced to accept low-paying jobs in a society which has become increasingly credentials-conscious.

First Nations' leaders see the need for education and Native adults are returning to school for upgrading courses, job readiness and vocational training, as well as basic literacy classes. In the past, Alberta Natives have focussed on practical skills and job training (Trussler 1971; AETNA 1982), but recently more Native adults have been enrolling in academic upgrading courses in order to pursue post-secondary educational goals. They are looking beyond immediate but low-paying, low-status jobs and planning for professional careers because they realize the only way to change their economic, social, and political situation is to prepare more Native people to assume leadership roles: people who understand and can successfully compete within the Canadian "system" in order to make positive changes within the Native community.

The purpose of education has been debated for centuries, and researchers in the past twenty years have offered various refinements on currently accepted definitions. Because her survey of Native adult programs in Southern Alberta encompassed a wide range of courses involving both formal and informal learning, Trussler (1971:8) saw the need "to educate adults to the level necessary for training for a trade to compete in the labour market". Others say that education is an empowerment process; the purpose of education is to assist the students in becoming independent and self-determining (Hostler 1986; Kitching 1991). Some view adult education as a second chance for adults who have had their learning interrupted (McLaren 1985). Barman et al. (1987) assert that Indian education demands the

> dual tasks of attaining an adequate standard of living for its members and participating in the general civic life of the larger society, while at the same time protecting and valuing its heritage, institutions, values and world view (p. 4).

Native education in the twenty-first century will work towards the goal of promoting the culture of the society it serves (Green 1990:37). In her study of an adult upgrading program, Teeling (1990:35) found that, to the women she studied, "education offered...an opportunity to change and to 'make something' of their lives. It was the pathway to a life style with respectable social and financial status". Advocates of community education suggest education should "take a holistic, comprehensive approach to the problems of individuals and families...Schools need to include and involve the community in solving the community's problems" (White 1991:6).

While some argue that adult education should be practical and oriented to job skills, others believe that a working knowledge of the main academic disciplines is essential (Hostler 1986; Braxton-Brown & Keenan 1990). If scholars and educators cannot agree about the purpose of education, it seems reasonable to assume that the participants in any adult program (i.e. students, teachers and administrators) will differ in their perceptions. In the case of AAUP on the reserve where my research was conducted, the purpose of, or philosophy for the program was never clearly articulated, leading to dissension among the participants as to whether the course had successfully prepared students and achieved its objectives.

If instructors and students in adult Native programs are working towards divergent ends, the programs will be seen as unsuccessful from both perspectives. If an upgrading program such as AAUP is academically oriented, the instructors will believe that objectives have not been achieved if follow up data are collected on the women who successfully completed the program but who have not continued their education as expected. Policy-makers, too, may not consider the programmes cost-effective if graduates do not continue education or enter the labour market (Clatworthy 1981). The women, on the other hand, may believe the program was valuable because of personal satisfaction and growth, and may feel that just staying in school for an entire school year meets the goal they had set out to achieve. Pursuing a career immediately may not seem appropriate for them.

Thus, an understanding of the Native woman's perspective is essential in the planning and designing of effective upgrading programs on reserves. It was the purpose of this study to obtain information which would be of use to educators of Native adults, to add to the limited research available about the outcomes and impact of adult education programs in the Native community.

Adult Academic Upgrading Program (AAUP)

When the Director of Education and the Chief and Council agreed that there was a need for an adult program on the reserve in 1988, a local college offered to provide instructors and a limited number of materials. Although a similar course was available in a nearby town, it was felt that a course offered on the reserve in a familiar setting would reduce the apprehension of adult students who had not had positive experiences in their previous schooling. Also, an on-reserve program would virtually eliminate transportation problems for many students without vehicles. Band-operated daycare facilities and the availability of family members to care for children during the day, would ensure that the program was more accessible to women with children.

The Band has provided the old school building for AAUP. Little bigger than a house, it has three classrooms, two washrooms, an office and teachers' lounge on the main floor, and a small classroom, kitchen and "lounge" area in the basement. By the second year, the classrooms had been recarpeted and painted and the exterior stuccoed and painted. Coffee machines were purchased and desks were donated by the college. Plumbing and heating problems continued but the students seemed to be comfortable in the environment. Desks were arranged in a large circle with the teacher's desk at the front of the room for the first two years of the program. By 1991, the increasingly large numbers of students in each class forced a return to more traditional seating patterns.

Timetables similar to public high schools, course outlines and pre-selected materials, rigidly adhered-to attendance requirements, group instruction, periodic examinations and formal progress reports, define the program. Because of differing levels of ability in Math, a sequentially-learned subject, students work at their own pace through a highly-structured text and workbook. Students are expected to complete English, Social Studies, Science and Math courses in order to graduate and are instructed in study skills, life skills, time management and planning in classes conducted twice a week by the full-time program counsellor.

While the external structures of the program resemble those of public schools, the content of the courses has been adapted to the special interests of an all-Native group. Science has become Environmental Studies (land and water ecology), Social Studies has become an integrated Cree and Native History/Issues course called Native Studies, and English incorporates literature written by Natives and about Natives in various genres such as poetry, short stories, non-fiction, news articles, novels, legends and student-produced creative work. The traditional expert-novice relationship exists between teachers and students, but the instructors show respect for the adult status of the students, allowing them to approach concepts and ideas from their own perspectives. Group discussion is encouraged and tolerance of different opinions is expected.

Being adaptable to the needs of the students and community is a vital consideration in planning and implementing an adult program. AAUP has revised its curriculum to include computer classes, regularly scheduled Physical Education and numerous field trips and social events. In addition to providing class instruction for two levels of ability (grade 7 and grade 9), in 1991, due to the number of applicants who tested below the grade seven academic level in English and Math, a third class was introduced for basic literacy upgrading. AAUP has been expanded to a two-year program, with the expectation that students will achieve a grade nine equivalency the first year, and grade ten or eleven in year two, preparing them for the intensive University and College Entrance Program (UCEP), which condenses all three high school grades in eight months, or enabling them to pass standard entrance examinations at NAIT or similar technical institutions requiring a minimum of grade ten for their trades programs. Funding from

Canada Employment and Immigration Commission (CEIC), the Band, the affiliated college and the availability of student loans are allowing more adult Natives to benefit from upgrading programs.

Table 1: AAUP ENROLLMENT 1988-1991[1]

Year	Women	Men	Total
1988-89	10	7	17
1989-90	14	11	25
1990-91	24	15	39
1991-92	21	20	41

While the statistics in Table 1 indicate that there is a fairly equal distribution of male and female participants in AAUP, the number of women who actually graduate is substantially higher (in the 1989-90 school year only two men completed the program). Reasons for the high drop out rate of men vary: some are incarcerated, some accept jobs, some succumb to alcoholism, and some are withdrawn because of extended absences related to hunting, hiding from the police or long-term visits to friends or family off the reserve. However, what interests me more, is why the women, with all of their family responsibilities, abusive relationships and financial hardships, have the determination and commitment to complete AAUP.

The Participants and Sampling

I chose to focus on only the women in AAUP because I was impressed with their dedication and single-mindedness regarding completing AAUP. In addition, I felt that I would be able to relate to them as a woman far more easily than attempting to overcome traditional gender expectations in an effort to understand the upgrading experience from a male perspective. I had already established close personal relationships with the women I taught and realized that that rapport would enable me to access deeper levels of meaning in conversations about their perception of the student experience.

---

[1] Figures taken from attendance registers at the beginning of each year. They do not reflect the number of students who actually completed the program.

All of the women who participated in this study attended AAUP in 1988/89 or 1989/90. They had been out of the public school system for at least two years and were eighteen years of age or older when they were accepted into the program. Only one of the women had finished high school; the others had dropped out of junior high school as a result of early pregnancy or because they were needed at home. All of them are members of the Band and live on the reserve. Their linguistic heritage is either Cree or Stoney, but except for the older women, their first language is English. At the time they were attending AAUP, all of the women had young children at home but had different marital status: some were single, some were married, and some were in common-law relationships. After they completed AAUP, they either continued their education in off-reserve programs, worked part-time or full-time or stayed at home with their children.

In the two school years that I was an instructor in AAUP, twenty women were enrolled and completed at least eight months of the one-year course. These were the women I sought out for interviews. Of the seven women in the 1988/89 class, I was unable to locate three, but I was able to obtain information on what they were doing. After finishing a second year of upgrading in a nearby town, Jenny[2] moved off the reserve in 1990 to continue her schooling at the college level in Calgary, and Marianne married her long-term common-law spouse, remaining on the reserve and becoming active in local affairs. Darlene began the University and College Entrance Program at an Edmonton college, but was asked to withdraw because of substance abuse and attendance problems and has severed all ties with the reserve. While she was unable to participate in an interview, Terri told me that she had hoped to continue her education when she moved to Edmonton after AAUP, but without the necessary funding and support, she was forced to move back to the reserve, working in the Band's day care centre and raising her two young children as a single mother.

---

[2] All names have been changed.

Of the remaining thirteen women who attended AAUP in 1989/90, I kept in touch with ten and contacted each one either in person, by phone, or by mail, to tell them about my research and ask for their participation in this study. The three women I was unable to reach were Margaret, Bonnie and Carla. I was unable to locate Margaret, an older woman with a learning disability who still lives on the reserve but who has been unable to obtain employment, and Bonnie, who has endured numerous court cases regarding custody of her three children and who has returned to a life of alcoholism. Carla dropped out of AAUP before graduation in 1990 and moved off the reserve with her boyfriend. Although I talked to Carole briefly while she was visiting the reserve, she has moved to a northern centre to complete the courses required for a high school diploma. Because of time and distance, an in-depth interview was not possible.

Of the ten women I talked to, three were unable to participate in the study. When I talked with Kathy, she had a five-week-old baby demanding her attention so that she was unable to meet with me for a formal interview, although she did tell me that she had held several part-time jobs since graduating from AAUP. Suzanne had recently given birth to her sixth child and was sharing living quarters with her sister for a while, then with her parents, and sometimes with her children's father. Although she agreed to participate in this study, without a phone and with no response to my letters, we were not able to get together. Candace commuted to a nearby town to complete two more years of upgrading after she finished the program on the reserve. I was able to interview her briefly in 1991, but she did not respond to my letters pertaining to the research for this thesis and I was unable to locate her on my many visits to the reserve.

Moon, Blue Stone, Meeka, Cassandra, Tanya, Tracey and Kim, the seven women who had the time and were able to participate in longer interviews, became my key informants and their stories form the basis of this study. In addition, Janet and Linda completed questionnaires and along with Phoenix, participated in an informal way through telephone calls and personal/social contact. Thus, the material which follows is drawn from half the women who attended the upgrading program in those two years.

The Research Process

Making Contacts

While working on a presentation for a graduate course, I was able to begin the research process by asking some of my former students to fill in a questionnaire encompassing demographic data and open-ended questions about their experience as students in adult upgrading (see Appendix B). The first responses were received in March, 1992 and they continued to arrive in the mail until October, 1992. In addition, each woman on the class lists from 1988 and 1989 was sent a form letter stating the nature and purpose of my research, detailing what would be required of those who participated and asking for their cooperation (see Appendix A). As the majority of the women do not have phones, stamped, self-addressed envelopes were enclosed for their replies. After two weeks, I went to the reserve to try to talk to as many of them as possible to determine how many would be willing to participate in the study and to arrange an interview schedule.

At this time, I also contacted the instructors and counsellor of AAUP. Although most of the women are no longer associated with AAUP on the reserve, I still thought it would be advisable to discuss the project with the current staff and obtain their support and input. The Native woman who teaches English and Native Studies offered valuable insights regarding potential problems in obtaining truthful answers to my questions because of the women's desire to "tell me what I wanted to hear".

Data Collection

Data were collected from unstructured interviews and informal conversations with the women who agreed to participate in the study. Spradley (1979) suggests that the best style is a blend of formal, informal and casual interviews in order to balance accuracy and candour. Each woman engaged in a brief initial interview and was asked if she wanted to meet again to discuss her comments at greater length. Obviously, some women were more articulate than others and provided more detailed and specific comments than those who found it difficult to express their thoughts. Therefore, the seven women who agreed to continue, contributed the majority of the data utilized for analysis.

The interviews were conducted in the women's homes, their offices, a restaurant or in the AAUP school building. All seven of the women agreed to have the conversations audio tape recorded to provide verbatim accounts of their observations. Although I had prepared several specific questions to ask each participant, more often the women guided the conversation, covering many aspects of the inquiry with little prompting.

After each interview, I compiled field notes which included my observations and perception of what had taken place. The women were asked to review the notes after they were typed so that they could make suggestions and corrections to preserve the accuracy of their comments. I received verbal feedback from five of the women; however, in two cases it proved difficult to arrange a follow up meeting so I mailed a copy to them and the women agreed to allow the notes to be used in the thesis.

In addition to the interviews, AAUP records were consulted in order to obtain enrollment and completion figures. I also obtained permission from the women to use essays and poems that they had written in my English and Social Studies classes. Information contained in the questionnaires was incorporated into participant profiles and their own words were used as much as possible to preserve the meaning.

Ethical Considerations

I am personally acquainted with all of the women who are involved in this research and having worked with them in AAUP as well as talking with them in a social context, I decided that asking them to sign a document in order to obtain their permission for participation would be an affront, destroying the trust that I had established with them. In addition, the Native experience with government paperwork has left many of them apprehensive about affixing their signature to anything "official" and I did not want to jeopardize the easy rapport I have with my former students with anything reminiscent of bureaucracy. Consequently, verbal permission was obtained from each woman and where possible, this agreement was tape recorded at the beginning of the interview.

In the letter I sent to each woman prior to the field work, I explained the purpose of my research and how extensive their involvement would be if they agreed to participate. I also assured them that they had the right to opt out at any time with no explanation, at which point I would agree not to use any information I had obtained from them. These points were also explained verbally to the women I interviewed.

To ensure the protection of their privacy, each woman was asked to choose a pseudonym for use in field notes and the thesis. All reasonable effort has been made to disguise the location and characteristics of the reserve and the women were assured that the information recorded in interviews would not be accessible to anyone on the reserve. Each participant was given the opportunity to make suggestions or corrections to my notes regarding her experiences, to ensure accuracy and preserve anonymity.

In any consideration of ethics, the researcher also needs to be alert to the possibility of contravening ethical boundaries. The complete separation of the researcher's observations (TEXT 1) and the participants' statements (TEXT 2) is necessary to prevent compromising the data with researcher bias or ethnocentrism (Werner & Schoepfle 1987). Werner and Schoepfle also stress that the researcher must maintain a cultural relativism in the field, as well as in the preparation and writing of an ethnographic report.

Because of the easy familiarity and close relationship I have with several of the women I included in this study, our conversations included much that was personal and sensitive. Being extremely protective of these women, I was careful not to include any information that went beyond the scope of this specific study.

Data Analysis

"Analysis of any kind involves a way of thinking. It refers to the systematic examination of something to determine its parts, the relationship among parts, and their relationship to the whole" (Spradley 1979:92). Using transcriptions of interviews, the results of questionnaires and material from the women's school assignments, as well as data collected during telephone and personal conversations, I compiled profiles of each of the women involved in the study. After each interview, I searched for recurring themes and categories of meaning and questioned the women as to their accuracy. Their experiences and recollections were similar so that member checks validated the data.

Approaching the same data from different angles, using many sources and methods, produces *construct validity* through triangulation (Spradley 1979; LeCompte & Goetz 1984; Werner & Schoepfle 1987). I began with a general hypothesis, or orientation to the situation, that Native women value their upgrading experience in a different way than is perceived by other participants in the program (i.e. instructors and administrators), and through interviews, documents and questionnaires, I was able to gather observations which tested the accuracy or validity of my hypothesis and its central constructs. In addition to construct validity, Lather (1986) emphasizes the need for *face validity,* whereby the researcher asks the respondents for their comments on the analysis of the data and the conclusions arrived at by the researcher. Where possible, I checked with the women to make sure they agreed with my tentative results and consequently refined my conclusions in light of their reactions. This is necessary in order to avoid ascribing my own meaning to what I observed and heard, rather than searching for the participants' meanings and perceptions. Finally, both Lather (1986) and Spradley (1979) raise the issue of *catalytic validity*, which asks ethnographers to consider the potential uses of their research.

Lather (1986) suggests that we "use the research process itself to empower the researched" (p. 73), concurring with Freire in an appeal to involve participants in the planning, execution and dissemination of social research. Spradley is concerned that "cultural descriptions can be used to oppress people or to set them free" (1979:13) and that there should be some practical relevance to all research. Throughout the data collection process, the women were informed that this study might be of use to educators who design adult upgrading programs so that they can understand the importance of the Native woman's experience, perhaps recognizing the value of the non-academic aspects of continuing education programs for adults. For the women themselves, the opportunity to be heard and the possibility that their life experiences and perceptions are valid and important, as well as just being asked to articulate their own feelings, was a form of empowerment. Being informed of the findings of this study has led to insight and activism (Lather 1986) for some of the women involved, in that they were forced to examine their motivations and recognize their own strength and potential.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I proposed three research questions which guided my inquiry into the value that Native women ascribe to their experience in an adult academic upgrading program on a reserve. The research demanded a qualitative treatment of data and an ethnographic design was utilized. The significance of the study in terms of educational research was presented and a brief explanation of the history, components and purpose of AAUP was included as contextual background.

In order to understand who was included in the study, I explained the method I used to choose participants and the process of making contact with the women who agreed to assist me in this research. The various data collection and analysis strategies were delineated and the efforts to maintain the confidentiality and privacy of the participants were discussed. Throughout the research process, I attempted to observe for evidence which would possibly demonstrate that my "hypothesis" was wrong, and to recognize and compensate for other possible researcher bias.

Having explained the research process, the next chapter will provide a general survey of literature related to adult education, Native education, and the education of women. In Chapter Three, I want to introduce the women with whom I shared so much and the final chapter will present an analysis of the data and conclusions that can be drawn from this research.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

"Education gives hope and an eventual release from the dismal dowry of most First Nations women" (McDonald 1989:28). This "dismal dowry" is an unending cycle of poverty, abuse and social services: the legacy of 150 years of paternalistic government policy. While Native people in general have suffered because of inadequate and assimilationist education, Native women are doubly disadvantaged because of their traditional cultural roles as primary care-givers and other-centredness and their status in an androcentric society. Will more education necessarily lead to better jobs and higher socioeconomic status or is schooling designed to maintain the status quo and reproduce the inequality in Canadian society?

Research about Native women and adult education is not extensive. In fact, the possibility of upgrading interrupted schooling is a relatively recent phenomena (Carney 1982) for Native women who may have dropped out of junior high school because of early pregnancy, family responsibilities, perceived discrimination or economic hardship necessitating employment. While First Nations' leaders declared the need for Indian control of Indian education in their 1972 "Red Paper", adult Natives have been slow to see the connection for themselves and women have felt that family responsibilities preclude their participation in education. However, concomitant with the rising female participation in education in mainstream society is the growing awareness by Native women that they have the right to an education as well. Many barriers to their participation in upgrading programs must be overcome but because of their commitment to providing a better life for their children, statistics show that women are more likely to complete upgrading programs and many post-secondary degree courses than men (MacKeracher 1982; Moore-Eyman 1984; Hughes & Kennedy 1985; McLaren 1985; Guppy et al. 1987; McDonald 1989; Horsman 1990).

Because of the lack of research in the field of adult Native women and education, literature pertaining to adult women in upgrading, Adult Basic Education and vocational skills programs has been surveyed. While Assheton-Smith (1988) asserts that being a Native woman presents different problems than being a non-Native woman, many of the experiences of mature women in literacy education or upgrading programs in developing countries, Britain, the United States and Canada are similar to those of Native women because of comparable socioeconomic status and the traditional role of women in all countries. General research on adult Native education also provides further insight into cultural differences which may be unique to Canada's First Nations' schooling experiences.

In this chapter, a discussion of the education of women in developing countries will be followed by an examination of some of the research that has been done about adult women returning to school in the Western world. Studies pertaining to Native education in the Canadian public school system, as well as adult Native education, will be presented in the final section of the chapter. The literature review will focus on the impact that continuing education has on the women who take advantage of "a second chance".

The Education of Women in Developing Countries

A review of some of the literature on women in developing countries reveals that regional customs and beliefs emphasize the inferior position of women in many traditional societies. A proverb from the Middle East asserts that "just as there is no donkey with horns, there is no woman with brains" (Ramdas 1990:35). In Senegal, women are thought to be naive, stupid and deceitful (Kelly 1989). Hindu legal texts state that a woman is dependent on her father as a child, on her husband as an adult and on her son when she is old (Ramdas 1990; Reddy 1991) and because of her basic lack of thought and inability to form opinions, a woman must be protected and kept away from harm until she is married at the earliest possible stage (Ramdas 1990). An old Tamil saying underscores a woman's marital relationship: "A husband is to be given respect even if he is a stone or a blade of grass" (Shah 1986:32). Rural women are subservient and considered "mere chattel" (UNICEF 1991:12), whose primary functions are to reproduce, cook, clean, raise children, and sow, maintain, harvest and market the crops. In many African countries, along with polygamy, the large family may bring prestige, more land and old age security, but numerous children increase the woman's already overwhelming workload (Boserup 1981). In Islamic countries under constraint of purdah, girls are veiled by age six (Iran) or age nine (Saudi Arabia) and segregated from males because pubescent girls are not to be seen in public or to be unmarried (Stromquist 1988; Mehran 1991). Bernard and Gayfer (1983) state that while the problems of being poor and powerless are common to both men and women, "even a 'powerless' man assumes he is not as powerless as a woman just because he is a man" (p. 34).

Along with these widespread beliefs are many suspicions and fears about an educated woman. "A respectable girl must not expose herself to outside influences...Education of women will disturb the balance of relations among the members of the family" and result in women of doubtful character who will not remain under the control of their husbands (Reddy 1991:37). In Papua, New Guinea, it is thought that

> educated girls would not be good mothers because they tended to respect less their traditions, parents and husbands, they did not work as hard for their families, and the education they received was unrelated to the tasks of being a wife and mother (Stromquist 1988:28).

Men in India believe that if a woman is educated she will convert to another religion, become immoral and irresponsible and try to dominate men (Tellis-Nayak 1982). In Nigeria, fears that educated women will become discontented with their lot has led to four other widely held beliefs that educated women

1. do not make good wives
2. are morally corrupt or promiscuous
3. are barren
4. find it difficult to get husbands (Kelly 1989:50).

Since much of the education for women in developing countries has included family planning or information about birth control, African men "fear that fertility control will undermine the traditional system of family labour, a step toward equality of the sexes" (Boserup 1981:187). If the traditional role of women is changed through education, many communities worry that there will be a breakdown of moral and cultural values (UNESCO 1975).

It is true that education transforms lives but the changes are not always easy to deal with. Women who return to school must be prepared for self-examination and a different perception of themselves, altered relationships with others and a questioning of their role as women. The impact of education on a woman's life has far-reaching consequences which affect every aspect of a previously 'acceptable' life.

In India, education adds "rich new dimensions to women's traditional roles" because a woman can help her children with their school work and guide their career aspirations, she is better able to care for family health and nutrition, and she has a new capacity to supplement the family income (Kelly 1989). Describing various developmental strategies and programs in women's education, Tellis-Nayak (1982) finds that despite the focus on domestic skills, most participants experience radical personal growth in overcoming shyness, developing leadership skills, self-esteem, dignity and an increased confidence in their skills and abilities. While the UNESCO projects (1975) in Upper Volta, Nepal and Chile reported some disappointments and recognized that household skills and craft programs reinforced the traditional role of women, they also heightened "awareness of the necessity for the full participation of women in the development of the country and of the importance of education at all levels in achieving this" (p. 31). The education of women is directly linked to a decrease in infant mortality and an increase in life expectancy due to an awareness of nutrition, family planning and hygiene (Ramdas 1990; UNICEF 1991). As women learn marketable vocational skills that increase the likelihood of their participation in the paid labour force, and as they gain greater economic leverage, and achieve lower fertility (Blumberg 1989), they contribute to increasing the GNP. In addition, as they learn new agricultural methods and have access to labour-saving technologies, they also augment their families' economic yield (Junge & Tegegne 1985; Ramdas 1990).

Women who participate in adult education undergo significant personal growth as a result of their experience. Being exposed to a nurturing environment where opinions and ideas are actively encouraged and valued, helps the women become more self-confident and to value themselves more (Tellis-Nayak 1982; Junge & Tegegne 1985). After completing their literacy training, some of the Ethiopian women in Junge and Tegegne's study (1985) expressed their joy of learning by saying they had "left the darkness and entered the light" (p. 610). They had higher ambitions for themselves, not content to be the women they were before they learned to read. Having their eyes and world opened through education, some women said that "even when I am very old I will strive to learn" (p. 610).

Women in developing countries are expected to maintain their traditional roles so that the changes that occur as a result of going to school or learning to read affect the women, their families and their communities. While Western feminists may view these changes as a positive step toward liberation from centuries of subordination, the impact of educating women has repercussions that cause upheaval to traditional values and beliefs.

In Nigeria, where women have access to education and employment opportunities at all levels, many women with high-paying jobs have discovered a new economic independence which has changed family patterns: they are delaying marriage, gaining more control over family finances, choosing to have fewer children, acquiring property, and asking for more divorces (Kelly 1989). Pursuing an education has resulted in a paradox for Indian women: they are educated to stand on their own two feet but are socialized to adjust to the needs of their husbands and families (Kelly 1989). In Botswana, girls are exposed to the Western concept of family (husband, dependent wife, dependent children) which does not necessarily relate to their lives as single mothers. Bernard and Gayfer (1983) criticize some non-formal programs as "raising expectations and nothing else" (p. 36) because of the discrepancy between the skills and training they receive in class and the very different realities of the job market.

It is apparent that when a woman continues her education, there will be far-reaching consequences. Even if the schooling experience results in no obvious change in her life style or economic status, no matter what the program content, any exposure to learning will have an impact on the individual woman, her family and community. However, if a program increases awareness or raises the consciousness of the participants, it will have made a difference in their lives (Bernard & Gayfer 1983; Hall 1989; Ramdas 1990; UNICEF 1991). In the next section, literature from Canada, the United States and Britain will reveal similar conclusions about women's experiences in the developed world.

Women in the Western World

> I was a single — a mother at seventeen. So I had a child I had to take care of and provide for. So I stayed home for a while with my son until he was about two or three — the whole time realizing that I wanted something better. I wanted something more. I needed more for myself (Petal Jenson in Rogers 1992:2).

Women who have had their schooling interrupted because of early pregnancies are committed to their roles as mothers and their first priority is the well-being of the children. Often their educational plans are put on hold because of this other-centredness. As well, accessibility problems and barriers often prevent their participation in available programs. Much research has been devoted to these obstacles (Trussler 1972; AETNA 1982; MacKeracher 1982; McLaren 1985; Hughes & Kennedy 1985; McDonald 1989; Horsman 1990; Rodriguez & Sawyer 1990; Teeling 1990; Brokop 1991), which tends to focus on the negative aspects of women's reentry in education. It is time to move beyond the barriers and accept as fact that it is difficult for adult women to continue their education. It would be more useful to ask how the educational experience has affected the women who decide to return to school.

A balanced look at the impact that education has on their family relationships, their role as women and the changes they experience in themselves as individuals will be presented. A review of the literature of women in adult education, as well as some of the research in Native adult education indicates both positive and negative outcomes. While Native women have to deal with unique cultural roles and expectations, their experiences as adult learners parallel those of women from all lower socioeconomic backgrounds.

Personal Affective Outcomes

Women who resume interrupted schooling, experience changes in themselves and their outlook on life. Whether they have enrolled in basic literacy, adult upgrading, vocational skills training or domestic skills programs, women gain self-confidence and feel better about themselves as a result of exposure to learning in the classroom (Hughes & Kennedy 1985; Pillay 1986; Teeling 1990; Brokop 1991).

Instructors in adult upgrading programs tend to measure success in terms of academic achievement; in other words, they think that building self-esteem is a secondary achievement or by-product of a literacy program, whereas the "students see success, first and foremost, in terms of affective personal or social achievements", not skills improvement or employment opportunity, and for the women involved, "this is achievement in its own right" (Pillay 1986:77). Add to this the findings of Belenky et al. (1986) that women are "drawn to the sort of knowledge that emerges from firsthand observation", not out-of-context learning, not from words but from action and observation (pp. 200-201), and it would appear that the most valuable outcome of schooling experiences for women includes everything *but* the acquisition of procedural knowledge that is stressed in the curriculum.

In a study of Project Morning Star at the Blue Quills School in northern Alberta, Read (1983) observed "attitudinal changes particularly in regards [sic] to their feelings about their own capabilities" (p. 26). Having found a "bond of support" with women who share similar experiences, exposure to different ideas and world views in their coursework teaches the women to "value themselves, to relate more effectively with others, and to be more tolerant" (Teeling 1990:84). An increased self-esteem affects all aspects of their lives and leads to a greater independence. For women struggling with the dependency created by illiteracy, learning how to read and write makes them feel more in control of their own lives (Pillay 1986). These women feel a great sense of accomplishment on completing a course; entering the program as a 'nobody', through participation in adult classes, they leave believing, "I can be a somebody" (Teeling 1990:35).

However, these intangible rewards have a hidden cost. The four Edmonton women involved in Pillay's (1986) study "were literally readjusting their self-image and that psychological transition is often problematic" (Pillay 1986:80). It is not only the women themselves who must deal with the changes incurred through gaining a more positive self-concept; their family relationships are also affected.

Family Relationships

When their mothers go back to school and experience success, the children reap the benefits (Carney 1988). Trussler (1971) found that a woman's "attitudes toward education will have a marked effect on the motivation and accomplishments of the children in educational matters" (pp. 109-110). The women have a better understanding of their children's schooling and tend to become more involved (Pillay 1986; Foreman 1987; Brokop 1991). Women who successfully pursue their education serve as effective role models for their children and for the young people of their communities (Horsman 1990). Seeing their mother doing homework and struggling to overcome obstacles in order to attend classes regularly, shows children that education is valued and involves sacrifices.

In the face of seemingly overwhelming odds against completing any program, women do persevere and reap tremendous benefits from upgrading programs. The most obvious extrinsic reward is the modelling of the importance of education for their children. More confident in their own academic ability, the women are able to take an active interest in their children's school performance (Pillay 1986). This is a benefit that will affect the next generation who will hopefully learn from their mothers' examples and complete their education (Trussler 1971; Teeling 1990; Horsman 1990). Completing an upgrading program often results in respect from the family and community. Increased access to jobs previously unavailable enables the women to better support their families, and opportunities to continue to higher levels of education will open more doors.

Negative Outcomes

At the same time, studies assessing the impact of continuing education have usually focussed on positive outcomes for women (Read 1983; Patel 1984; Hughes & Kennedy 1985; McLaren 1985; Williams & Watt 1987; McDonald 1989; Horsman 1990;

Teeling 1990; Rodriguez & Sawyer 1990; Brokop 1991) which leads to the belief that women who participate in adult education will experience desirable changes in themselves and their lifestyles. However, it is necessary for educators to understand that there is potential for negative consequences in the lives of women who continue their education as adults.

Family relationships often suffer when a woman becomes a full-time student. Children do not always understand that time with their mother has to be restricted when she is going to school. While some husbands actively encourage a wife's decision to return to school, education "fundamentally affects the balance of power in a relationship and threatens the dominance of the partner who is depended on" (McCaffery 1985:65). Some husbands see their wife's new independence as a threat and while they may not actually discourage her from continuing her education, they may refuse to look after the children or help with household chores so that she has no time for school work — a form of "negative support" (Horsman 1990:43). Other family members may resent a woman's education, feeling envious and inferior as she achieves new status in the community (Moore-Eyman 1984). Maguire (c.1987) reports an increase in spousal violence towards women in one American program. However, sometimes a woman receives encouragement and respect from her family and friends for what she has accomplished (Pillay 1986; Teeling 1990; Horsman 1990; Brokop 1991).

In very traditional Nova Scotia, gender roles are clearly defined. A woman who wants to go back to school must resolve a dilemma: she must choose to be a 'good mother' and stay at home to look after the children or attend classes to increase employability which will take her out of the home and make her feel like she is a failure as a mother (Horsman 1990). Hughes and Kennedy (1985) say that women who participate in adult education programs have "a desire to continue to extend themselves further either within education or in the community" (p. 169), recognizing a liberation from traditional roles and understanding that it is not selfish or irresponsible to improve themselves.

Native Education

The Task Force on Intercultural Education presented a report on Native Education to the Alberta provincial government in 1972, which identified five major areas of concern that needed to be addressed: curriculum, parental involvement, cultural differences, language competency and teacher training (Alberta Education 1972). The report stressed that having a culture or set of values with which to identify is necessary for a good self-image. Ten years later, the Curriculum Policies Committee advised the Minister of Education that there was not enough communication between Native parents and schools, teachers needed to be trained to teach Natives, and curriculum should reflect Native values, history and culture. The Committee also recommended a review of existing sources used in schools to remove materials with negative or insulting references to Natives (Alberta Education 1982). Yet another committee (Tolerance and Understanding) prepared a report in 1984, recommending the "development of a comprehensive Native Studies program in the existing curriculum at all grade levels" (Alberta Education 1984:151). It presented suggestions for curriculum, teacher training, acceptance of cultural differences and Native involvement in education. The Honourable Nancy Betkowski, then Minister of Education, issued a policy statement on Native Education in 1987 to add to the stack gathering dust in government offices. She stated that "Alberta Education recognizes Native history, culture and lifestyles must be included in studies...Native people must have the opportunity to guide and influence the education of their children" (Alberta Education 1987:3) and promised that Alberta Education would develop classroom materials which "include and highlight aspects of Native heritage, cultures and lifestyles" (p. 5). She proposed teacher training and in-service and a partnership in decision-making between Native people and schools (p. 7). In October 1991, the Honourable Jim Dinning, Minister of Education, also announced a continuing commitment to Native education. Following this mandate, Edmonton Public Schools prepared a resource document entitled, "Promoting Success for Native Students:

Programming Strategies" (1992), based on a review of the literature and feedback from individuals and groups within the district and community.

Proposals and policies presented over the past twenty years seem to have made little difference for the Native high school student in Alberta. Despite curricular changes and more tolerant societal attitudes towards cultural diversity, the Native student still perceives the integrated high school as an alien environment. From the moment Native children enter a high school, they are bombarded with social situations very different from those to which they are accustomed. There are dozens of courses to choose from, in a tracking system that holds little meaning for them. Regulations and consequences for infractions are foreign to the Native students, yet the administration assumes their familiarity with procedures. Compulsory and rigidly enforced attendance requirements are baffling to young people who may have a different approach to time (they laughingly refer to it as *Indian time*). Teachers make assumptions about the ability and performance level expected in their courses and often refuse to adapt methodology or material to suit the needs of individuals. Used to making independent decisions and choices, and often older than their classmates, Native students may resent their loss of choice and options, often being treated as children needing guidance. Usually a very small minority in every class, they feel uncomfortable participating and reluctant to approach the teacher for help. In the halls and cafeteria, they encounter subtle and sometimes overt discrimination from other students and exclusively seek out other Natives for companionship and a feeling of belonging to a group (Holmgren 1971:130-131). In a school where the non-Native to Native ratio may be 5:1, group solidarity is essential to ease loneliness and a sense of isolation.

All of these factors may cause alienation for the Native student entering grade ten. In many cases, previous schooling has taken place in a community school on the reserve. Pursuing a secondary education often means extensive travel time on a bus to a "foreign" situation, resulting in disorientation and confusion. If the Native students do not receive adequate parental and school support and counselling, their chances of successfully completing a high school program are seriously diminished.

In an extensive study of Native student drop outs in Ontario schools (Mackay & Myles 1989), Native parents stressed the need for better teachers in order to keep their children in school. In their minds, teacher effectiveness is not necessarily connected to better qualifications, training, or credentials, but rather to more humanistic and caring attitudes. Students felt that teachers seemed impersonal and ignored them or thought that "teacher discipline was directed at them because they were Native rather than because they as students had committed an infraction of the rules" (p. 34). McCarthy's (1971) study of Northland School Division almost twenty years earlier also revealed that a significant percentage of drop outs interviewed stated that they left school because of trouble with a teacher.

The students interviewed in Holmgren's (1971) research placed great emphasis on discrimination within the school, both from students and teachers. They stated that while discrimination by teachers was less frequent and more subtle, hearing a teacher tell the class that 95% in Math was "not bad for an Indian" (Holmgren 1971:109) is obviously devastating to a Native student's already fragile self-esteem.

Native parents who have had negative experiences in school and who did not complete high school themselves, have difficulty providing the support and encouragement that is vital in order to ensure that their children stay in school. They do not feel able to assist with homework, do not understand the complexities of the educational structure (i.e. matriculation, general or Integrated Occupational Program streams) and are reluctant to contact the school to inquire about their children. It is unfortunate that Native parents' only contact with the school is often to be told of the problems their child is having; very seldom do they hear words of praise for achievement. As parents, they are accused of being apathetic, of not providing a home environment conducive to study or positive support for their child's educational growth (Edmonton Public Schools 1992); however, in many cases they feel helpless or even ambivalent to the purpose of formal school designed to assimilate their children. In addition, their social or family problems are often so pressing and all-consuming that they have little time or energy for their children's educational needs (Mackay & Myles 1989).

In research conducted with regard to parental support and home-school contact, Natives are shown to be less interested in their child's schooling, but if it is based on attendance at parent-teacher nights, these statistics are misleading. Distances are prohibitive to many Native parents without access to transportation and contact is difficult for the many homes on a reserve without telephones. It is interesting to note that Clifton's (1971) study of Ponoka Junior High School found that Native students were "subjected to *more* parental pressure to succeed" (p. 70) than the non-Native children, belying the assumption that Native parents do not care about their children's education.

If there is pressure from the school and parents, the Native student also experiences pressure from the reserve community. Although most Native leaders see the need for education, there is justifiable concern that integrated students will have to choose between their own culture and that of the dominant group, and that educated Native children will forget their ancestry. Many times, students who are experiencing success in school meet hostility among their own people for thinking they are smarter than other less educated Natives and are accused of being "whitewashed" (Holmgren 1971:102,103). In the face of this pressure, many students drop out of school rather than be shunned or humiliated on their home reserves where they intend to live.

Why do Native students drop out of school? Mackay and Myles (1989) found that the reasons are similar for all dropouts from comparable socioeconomic backgrounds. They are often two or more grades behind their age group because of poor academic skills, as defined by provincial standards. The curriculum may be biased or irrelevant in the context of their life on the reserve. Without the vital counselling and parental support, they lose interest in school. They fail to establish friendships with non-Natives and are influenced by a small circle of Native peers. Lacking career counselling, their future plans may be unrealistic, vague or non-existent.

> There is also a common prejudgment by school personnel that Native children cannot do well in academic programs so they are frequently placed in vocational and service programs without any choice (Alberta Education 1984:149).

The school situation is alien in its size, rules, discipline and expectations. Facing discrimination from staff and students can erode the Native students' self-esteem and feelings of self-worth. There may be responsibilities at home which force them to take jobs to help with family finances. Early marriage or pregnancy forces girls to choose family life over educational goals. Regular attendance may be difficult because of distance, family problems or because

> programming may not provide sufficient opportunities for Native and other students to acquire knowledge about contemporary Native issues and positive attitudes about Native peoples (Edmonton Public Schools 1992:2).

The reasons for the high rate of Native student drop outs have been documented and researched for decades. Additional studies are not the solution. The existing framework of facilities available must be adapted and made feasible for the purpose of preparing "persons to behave and to function appropriately in the context of two cultural environments" (Swerhun 1981:98). Adjusting the curricular content to reflect Native traditions and culture, providing intensive counselling services, ensuring that teachers are caring and approachable, increasing non-Native awareness of the value and worth of cultures that are *different* not inferior, and increasing the contact with parents will all help the Native students feel less alienated in a large, integrated high school.

Adult Native Education

While some progress is being made in the retention of Native students in the public school system, government departments and Indian leaders have seen the need to focus on adult education at the same time. "In Alberta, for example, 23.6% of the Native population over the age of 15 has less than grade 9 as the highest level of achievement compared to an Alberta average of 10.8%" (Edmonton Public Schools 1992:2). A variety of adult programs are available for upgrading both on and off the reserve, for those wanting job training or those who desire preparation for post-secondary education (Trussler 1971; AETNA 1982; Read 1983; Alberta Municipal Affairs 1987; Williams & Wyatt 1987; Alberta Advanced Education 1988; Frideres 1988; Carney 1988).

Westmeyer (1988) describes the special characteristics of adult learners returning to school for Adult Basic Education (ABE) or General Equivalency Diplomas (GED), which adult educators would do well to consider in planning programs. Although general in scope, Westmeyer's list of distinctive traits is also applicable to adult Natives returning to school. He states that these students are fearful of education, highly motivated, very respectful of instructors, not competitive but self-concerned in class, and hesitant to try new things. They need learning based on their experience to ease their fear and they have low self expectations due to previous failures. "Older learners require instruction that is directed at specific needs, that is seen as potentially useful, and that fits in with their own earlier experiences" (p. 30). Grades are meaningless, skills are all-important, and the mature students are goal-oriented. They see learning as a sideline to whatever their daily life involves.

Understanding these special needs, Rodriguez and Sawyer (1990) explain the characteristics of effective Native educational programming in their *Native Literacy Research Report*: community-based/controlled; instructional strategies that stress group interaction and that are consistent with cultural patterns; a whole language approach that emphasizes student-generated material; student-centred planning that recognizes the needs and backgrounds of individual learners; and culturally appropriate learning which contributes to the development of self-esteem and a positive Native identity. Rodriguez and Sawyer surveyed a sampling of 56 adult Natives in seven British Columbia regions. All the participants tested below grade six and were asked what they wanted from a literacy program. While the ratio of men to women was 3:2, the responses to the survey questionnaire could apply equally to both genders. The participants wanted to read and write better in order to read to their children, to more easily deal with government paperwork, and to achieve an increased independence (drive a car, travel alone, write letters). Only 17.9% identified economic goals as their primary motive for enrolling in a literacy program (p. 31). The most important finding of this study was that the needs of each community differ based on history, experience, character, aspirations and economic and social conditions. Therefore, adult Native education must be community based and not pre-determined by outside institutions or agencies and imposed universally on all Native communities.

The impact of education on adult Natives cannot be underestimated, both in personal changes and the effect on the entire community. However, there is still a lot of conflict within the Indian community regarding the value of "mainstream" education. Dr. Deb Crowfoot (Rogers 1992:5) discusses the dilemma faced by Natives who continue their education:

> I kind of found two groups. I found one group that were quote "pro-reserve". Like we're Natives — we don't want to go to school. And they didn't succeed in school. They say our ancestors...didn't have an education so why should we have to be here? And then they had the other groups who were really...struggling but they were getting an education. And these people went on to graduate. And their attitude was, you know, that they were proud to be Native but they wanted to basically make something of themselves so they can take something back to their culture to help build up their culture...Simply because I have my education now and now I feel it's extremely important for me to take this education back to my people...I think you look at it as improving yourself so you can help your people survive for the future.

While the goal of returning to their home reserves after completing their educational goals is commendable and will undoubtedly be advantageous for the community, there is still much resentment from those who have not succeeded in school (Moore-Eyman 1984a). Other band members may be offended by a perceived condescension on the part of returning university graduates who consider themselves superior to those who 'need their help'. Although it is encouraging to note the increasing numbers of Natives who are completing university and college programs, attitudes within the Native community need to be changed so that the community can benefit from the experiences and knowledge of band members who have acquired expertise in mainstream institutions.

Native Women and Education

In her article, "Understanding the Native Community", Beatrice Medicine (1987) explains that in the traditional Lakota society,

> the woman's role was equally recognized because it took both men and women to work cooperatively to keep the society functioning. Respect for women was ingrained. There was true egalitarianism (p. 24).

While this respect seems to have deteriorated in modern times, women are now taking leadership roles in male-dominated Native communities (Trussler 1971:109). "In many Native communities, women are considered the foundation of the community. It is also the women who bring about changes" (McDonald 1989:28), so the impact of their education cannot be ignored. Rogers (1992) interviewed two Alberta Native women who have achieved success in their professions. As potential role models for other young Native women, both stressed the importance of education as necessary for success:

> My mom was the first person to graduate from university from my community. So I was really lucky to have someone who had an education — someone to look up to. And also my dad had always told me that the only way that people will listen to you is if you have a degree or if you have some sort of certificate or diploma, 'cause otherwise, you know, it's very difficult...You know you may be tired and discouraged but you know, once you have your degree, people will listen to you (Karen Decontie, Civil Engineer, pp. 3-4).

> It's something I haven't given up. It's just something I've postponed and it's something I'm working on. And I still think education is the most important thing...So I really think that for personal growth as well as good employment it's really important to have a degree or at least finish the

> grade twelve and get some post-secondary education (Petal Jenson, Historic Sites Planner, p.5).

Is it realistic for Native women to buy into the generally accepted belief that more education will guarantee employment and a change in lifestyle and status? More so than for Indian men, Assheton-Smith (1988) believes that schooling makes a difference in employment for Indian women. Drawing parallels with the labour force participation and education levels of non-Native women, she cites a 1985 Statistics Canada document which states that

> [t]he level of educational attainment has a greater bearing on the labour force activity of women than of men. Women who are university or college graduates are far more likely to be in the labour force than those with less formal education, and their chances of being unemployed are much lower (Assheton-Smith 1988a:5).

However, as in non-Native society, women are still expected to raise children, do household chores and look after their husbands and extended families. The Natives who pursue post-secondary education must try to incorporate the freedom they have learned in non-Native institutions with their traditional roles and beliefs, "leading to a struggle within themselves to reconcile the cultural and psychic conflicts arising from competing values and aspirations" (Kirkness & Barnhardt 1991:7).

Although continuing education has positive effects on the women, their families and communities, Native women also face major upheavals in their traditional roles and relationships. Because there are so few employment opportunities on the reserve, an educated woman seeking a better life for herself and her children must of necessity relocate to an urban setting (Carney 1988). There is a fear that improving the education and thus increasing the desire for career opportunities will lead to the disintegration of reserves, as the best and brightest leave their home communities. Unless economic development can keep pace with the growing demand for employment opportunities, band members will be forced to look elsewhere (Tessier 1991:69).

Conclusion

Women who return to school are motivated by a certain dissatisfaction within themselves or with their life situations. The daily struggle to survive becomes so overwhelming that some women become determined to spare their children the same hardships. These women hope that education will provide the means to a better future.

It is difficult to assess the value of an adult education program. Should statistics be examined to determine how many women achieved a passing mark or reached a required grade level of ability? If participants have learned to enjoy reading (McEachern 1984) or are able to use the acquired knowledge to improve the quality of their lives (Junge & Tegegne 1985), the experience will have been worthwhile. In a small community with real or imagined in-fighting, if a group of women establishes new friendships with classmates, the impact on the entire community will have a healing effect (Junge & Tegegne 1985; Brokop 1991). If the educational experience enables a woman to qualify for and obtain a better job than she might otherwise be forced to accept, the growth in self-esteem will affect every aspect of her life (Teeling 1990; Rogers 1992). Whether a woman goes back to school in Bangladesh, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Nigeria, Chile or Canada, the impact of her experience in adult education will have repercussions.

As a result of further education, women are changed, reaping tangible and intangible rewards, as well as facing upheaval within themselves and in their personal relationships. Whether or not these changes can be measured or easily identified is not the issue. "There can be little doubt that the life-chances of individual learners, men and women, are very often transformed by their experiences of adult education" (Griffin 1991:265). Catching even a fleeting glimpse of a broader perspective of the world they live in, will cause some women to hope and strive for something more, while others will give in to despair that their lives can ever be changed. At the very least, being exposed to mental challenges and alternate viewpoints will force self-examination and questioning of existing circumstances. Perhaps this is the most important legacy of education:

> I haven't stopped learning. I'm probably learning more than I ever have before...It doesn't stop with high school. It doesn't stop with college. You just keep on learning (Dr. Deb Crowfoot in Rogers 1992:7).

The personal affective growth that women experience as a result of continuing their education, leads to empowerment, giving strength and voice to their potential as agents of change.

Despite the negative stereotypes of women in developing countries, some national leaders have recognized their puissance and contributions in development. Gandhi declared that

> the tenacity and resilience of women, their capacity to meet aggression with peace, and their tradition of silent self-effacement [are] the qualities with which volunteers for the country's non-violent struggle for freedom must be armed (Kelly 1989:141).

Even the Ayatollah Khomeini, religious leader of Iran, recognized that if women change, the society changes (Mehran 1991:43). It is this acknowledged belief in the strength and potential power of women that has maintained their seclusion in countries like Bangladesh where leaders understand that "if they go out 'their eyes will be opened'. Thus, as the women are kept ignorant, they can be suppressed" (Shah 1986:79). Given the opportunity to examine her world through different eyes, a woman changes her attitude toward herself, adjusts her aspirations and deals with social and personal relationships in a new way.

Everyone benefits when a Native woman continues her education — the Canadian public, the government and aboriginal people themselves (McDonald 1989) — and tapping the unrealized potential of Native women by providing appropriate programs and resources will provide impetus to the development of the native community, allowing these women to provide their children with a dowry of hope, confidence and success.

> When they took away the buffalo, they took away food, shelter, clothing, religion — everything that we needed. But now there is a new buffalo, and that is education (Foreman 1987:39).

The profiles of nine Native women are presented in the next chapter; their lives and souls have been laid out to view. Comments from other women will be incorporated as cogent testimony to the validity of their observations. As their former teacher, I can barely suppress the admiration I feel for their courage, tenacity and selflessness. In circumstances that could be deemed untenable, these remarkable women have quietly set their goals, put them on hold and then picked them up again when the time was right:

> You know, everything looks overwhelming if you look at it and you think about it. But if it's one step at a time it's really not that much. It's just all of a sudden, you know, you're there (Crowfoot in Rogers 1992:3).

CHAPTER 3

MEMORIES OF AAUP: WOMEN'S VOICES

> The education cutbacks! I don't agree with it. It seems as the years approach the white man has to find something to take away from the Indians. Why are they doing this? I think it's ridiculous. They are probably thinking, "Why didn't those damn Indians finish school when they had the chance, not after they have a bunch of children?" It really affects me a lot, because today I am very serious about getting my education, looking into the future for myself, also for my children. I've been on welfare before and I didn't like it. I don't want to be a welfare bum the rest of my life. I want to be able to be independent and earn my own money (Phoenix)[1].

Introduction

Of the seven women who were interviewed for this thesis, two attended AAUP in 1988 and five were enrolled in the 1989 class. Data obtained from questionnaires completed by two other women who did not have the time to be interviewed, are also included in this chapter. In addition, poems written by Phoenix and Bonnie[2] have been included to illustrate the work that was done by the women in the class. While some of them found it hard to express themselves verbally, many were able to show deep thought and emotion in the poetry they wrote in class. An excerpt from Tracey's final essay exam concludes this chapter.

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[1] Phoenix was also in AAUP in 1988, and continued her education at an Edmonton college the following year. After graduating with top marks in UCEP, she began her B.Ed. in Physical Education but due to a serious illness and an unplanned sixth pregnancy, she was forced to withdraw after a few months. Because of intense family problems and a pending court case, Phoenix was unable to participate in this study. However, because of the strength and emotional impact of her words, I received permission to include a poem and entries from the daily journal she kept while in AAUP.

[2] I tried to contact "Bonnie" in the months prior to beginning my interviews, but since she graduated with high marks in 1990, she has succumbed to alcoholism. Several times during her year in AAUP, her children were removed from her home because of abuse and neglect. She regularly brought her baby to class, but was forced to put him up for adoption at the end of the year. That is why her poem is so poignant. I hold the copyright, so that even though I was unable to contact her, I was able to include her poem as representative of a mother's anguish.

An understanding of their previous schooling and what motivated these women to enroll in an upgrading program on the reserve will serve as an introduction to their experiences in AAUP. The women were also asked to share their thoughts about what it is like to be a woman on the reserve. Their answers provide valuable insight into the special difficulties Native women face in their everyday lives, which affect their success in returning to school. Confronting and overcoming the traditional gender roles espoused by husbands, parents, and members of the community, make their completion of AAUP even more remarkable.

Their perceptions of the value of the upgrading program and the impact of their decision to return to school will be presented, as much as possible, in their own words. They describe personal transformations and changes in their family relationships that have occurred as a result of their upgrading experience. In addition, the women talk about their future educational and career goals.

The Women

At the time they were enrolled in AAUP, the ten women who participated in this research ranged in age from 21 to 46 years old. Two were married, one was divorced, one was widowed, three were in long-term common-law relationships, and two were single. All of the women had dependent children, and all of them lived on the reserve. In this section, each of the women (using pseudonyms) will be introduced individually, and then their comments will be grouped according to the afore-mentioned topics.

Blue Stone

The oldest of the women interviewed, Blue Stone finished grade seven and part of grade eight. She attended residential school from the age of 7 to 15, at which time she and two friends ran away. Her parents lived in a distant mining town, and she was allowed to go home for only a week at Christmas, a week for Easter and two months in the summer.

> One of the things that really bothered me at that time was I felt different, I guess, because I didn't have the right kind of clothes I always say, but as long as I was clean I should have went! Clothes and plus I was too shy. I always felt like I wasn't smart enough to learn and I just wasn't interested in learning at that time. A lot of my time was spent daydreaming and wishing I could go home, wishing I was at home with my family instead of being at residential school. Now when I look back, I see there was a lot of loneliness. There was nobody to talk to.

She had a job babysitting for a Mennonite family on her home reserve at the age of sixteen or seventeen, but most of the money went to her parents. "I guess that time already, people were taking advantage of me." She moved back to the reserve where she currently lives, but "there wasn't nothing around here, except to get married and have kids. That's what happened for the next 28 years."

In 1986, she tried upgrading on the reserve, but did not finish the program because "I was already into drinking and all that, so I figured it was really hopeless then, so I just dropped out of school and stayed at home." She continued to think about continuing her education, but her husband said, "You don't need to ever go back to school. You don't need to get a job. Why do you want to go to school and why do you want to get a job? That's *my* job." Blue Stone said, "So I never tried I guess because I knew it was hopeless."

As her children were growing up, she tried to buy them clothes that they would need, give them money and provide everything she had never had when she went to school, yet they dropped out of school anyway. So she told her husband, "It's time for me to go back and do something besides sitting at home. I have to get out." In 1988, she attended a Life Skills class in Edmonton before going into treatment for alcoholism. While in the treatment centre,

> I thought lots about how things could either go downhill, get worse, be alcoholic, all kinds of things, be in jail, or else straighten out my life and

> I decided it was better to straighten it out. There was still hope; there was still a chance.

She met people who had done worse things than she had and thought to herself, "These people were worse off than me and there's a chance for Blue Stone, and I'll go for it." Consequently, she applied for and was accepted into AAUP in 1989.

Cassandra

Cassandra is not originally from this reserve, but was raised in Edmonton. She attended "white" schools, except for grade nine, when she went to an all-Native junior high school. Her mother always thought that she "would be better off in just a regular school". She dropped out in grade ten due to family problems and "felt like I wasn't good enough to be in white society. I felt uncomfortable in a white school. I always did. As a child growing up, I got picked on."

Married in her teens, she was 21 when she decided to enroll in AAUP on the reserve where she lived with her husband and two children. She wanted her children to have things she did not have.

> I wanted to start setting some goals for myself, like what I was going to do and the kind of things I would do for my children and I knew that would mean school...the kind of schooling that I'd never had. I was thinking of education for the kind of job I wanted to have, not a crummy job. I don't want a job that I'd be unhappy with.

She believes that the harder your life has been, the more determined you are to change it. Even though she is married, what if something happens to her husband?

> I don't want to depend on my husband. Some day it will be my turn to support the family. You can't rely on someone else. You have to do it for yourself if you want it. Nobody's going to do it for me and I want to do it for me and I want my kids to see it. I want them to see their mom determined to complete a goal.

She said she wanted to go back to school for her children's sake, but also to help her understand who she is and what she can do.

Tracey

Seventeen years after completing grade twelve, Tracey was 36 years old and had five children living at home.

> I've had my ups and downs in my past educational trail but I have no grievances about the downs. In a sense it made me realize the importance of strength and determination one requires to succeed. However, I do regret the years it took me to realize the importance of education. My elementary school years were safe and secure because I was right at home and with my own people. Integration with the white people in my junior high school years was somewhat frightening and frustrating at times. More out of loyalty to my parents and to prove to myself I was not inferior to the white students, I completed grade nine with decent marks. In my senior years, I encountered some racist and prejudicial remarks aimed at Natives. Not all students had the same opinion, but others labelled all Natives the same. I did not take those remarks personally so I didn't let that discourage me from school. Another thing that bothers me now to think of my senior years in school is the staff did not assist or direct the Native students into the proper channel that would enable them to choose the proper subjects to enter universities or colleges.

Tracey completed grade twelve in the public school system, but was not able to continue her schooling due to a combination of family problems and a change in her personal situation.

In her questionnaire, Tracey said that "I decided to continue my education as an adult because I wanted to fulfil some personal improvement and educational goals", and also to be a role model to her children. In addition, she wanted to contribute to the Native community when she achieved her educational goals. In the September 16 interview, she said she returned to school to "improve herself."

> It was for myself. In a way I'm selfish I guess, but it's for me I'm doing this. If I get ahead, I'm a good role model for my children.

Tracey said she does not care how long it takes her; she does not care if she is still going to school when she is 65, she is determined to continue her education.

Meeka

Meeka dropped out of public school after a few months of grade ten. She always attended "white" schools and was usually the only Native in the class. "When you're in high school, if the teacher told you you were stupid, well, you were stupid." Married at the age of 19, and a mother at 20, Meeka trained as a Canadian Health Representative in Ontario, and then worked in British Columbia for nine years. Moving back home to Alberta, she worked on the reserve for three years. After the tragic death of her husband in a car accident in 1985, Meeka battled alcoholism and got involved with a jealous man who abused her. Upon completing a rehabilitation program, she enrolled in AAUP in 1989, having four teenaged children living at home.

Meeka wanted to do things for her family, her brothers and sisters, her children and grandchildren. "I would learn all kinds of things just to make it easier for them; just because nothing was ever made easy for me, I want things easier for my children and grandchildren." Seeing education as a way to obtain a good job and provide for her family, Meeka enrolled in AAUP in 1989.

Kim

A single mother at the age of 20, Kim was living at home with her mother when she decided to attend the upgrading class on the reserve. Kim attended integrated schools in a nearby town from grade 6 to grade 10, when she had to drop out before finishing her first year of high school because she contracted pneumonia and had to miss a month of school.

> The guidance counsellor was supposed to tell the school that I was sick, that I wasn't coming back for a month, but she didn't so I got kicked out. One day I got a letter from the principal saying, "I never want to see your face in the school again. Please pick up your books..."

Kim says that her experience in public school was bad, "education-wise. If I asked a question, I would just get shot down. I wouldn't get answered because of my colour. They made me feel stupid."

After leaving high school, Kim experimented with drinking and drugs:

> Life in the fast lane for about a year. And I smartened up after I got pregnant. Finally, I realized I couldn't live my life like that forever. I couldn't handle it anymore.

While pregnant, she worked as a store clerk on the reserve and then in 1988 worked at the golf course in maintenance. Her female cousin and she "had to pull the weeds, cut the grass, pick rocks. But we moved up and started driving the machines."

When asked why she enrolled in the upgrading program on the reserve in 1988, she laughed and said,

> A little bit for the money, but to finally get on with my life. I wasn't going to stay home and be a mother for the rest of my life. I have nobody to support me, so I figured I would go to school, get a good job and earn a living.

Moon

Moon attended an integrated school off the reserve and did well in elementary school, where there were only a few Native students. However, when more Native students attended the junior high,

> that's when things started going downhill and that's when I thought I grew up. Skipping school, peer pressure, the older kids ('cause that's when I got hanging out with the older girls, the ones a couple years older than me), the drinking and the smoking, taking off from school, taking off from

> home. We had our own little gang. Anybody said anything to us, we'd attack.

She could have gone to high school, but was already living with Bill[3], and the school bus did not pick her up. That was in 1979/80, and she started working at the age of 18. She took a Life Skills program for four months and when she graduated, Bill was incarcerated and she had a baby to look after.

> Just finishing Life Skills, I was on this high. I had this basic job readiness training and so I was ready to go out into the world and fight it because I felt my self-esteem was high enough, I felt good about who I was; I'm a person, I'm important, I can do whatever I want.

She took Nechi (addictions counselling) training and worked as a volunteer in Social Services/Counselling, but battled a problem with alcohol for many years.

In 1982, she took another Life Skills course, and also completed English 13 in an on-reserve upgrading program offered by Alberta Vocational College, after which she immediately began working full-time in the Counselling Centre.

> For two years, I just drank. I'd get beat up by Bill. He started drinking, then he started having his extramarital affairs and I'd get into the fight...I knew all along that what I did was wrong. I knew that my daughter was suffering. I knew these things but I just kept going on, drinking. I knew this isn't the kind of life I want. I am a good person; I deserve a better life...I just woke up one morning asking myself, "What kind of life am I giving my kids?" I wanted them to have a home. I wanted them to be proud of their mom. I want them to be proud of me, to grow up wanting to be somebody.

So in February, 1987, she stopped drinking and has been sober for six years.

After 19 months as a counsellor, "I felt like I was burning out. I needed a change. I got tired and needed a break. That's when I came into upgrading [September, 1988]. I wasn't sure what I wanted to do." She told another counsellor that she wanted to get a grade twelve equivalency and that she wanted to get into a Social Work program.

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[3] All names have been changed.

Subsequent to being accepted into the upgrading program on the reserve, she thought, "Maybe I made this decision too fast, but it's too late, 'cause I put my resignation in. And that's when I got pregnant again".

Tanya

Tanya finished the first semester of grade ten off the reserve and dropped out because of family problems.

> Ever since I can remember, my parents have always been alcoholics. Even though they drank a lot, they used to wake us up and send us to school. They used to say that education was important. Lots of times we'd have nothing to eat. Go to school hungry. No lunch. Dressed poorly. And they'd have parties and they'd party all night and they'd expect us to go to school the next day.

At age 15 or 16, she started taking off from home and going to stay in other places because she did not like the situation at home and just wanted to get away. She began "staying with" Alex soon after, and after the birth of her second child, Tanya completed upgrading courses in Math 13, Accounting 10, and English 10, offered on the reserve by Alberta Vocational College.

After eleven years in which she had various jobs on the reserve ("brushing", picking roots, working at the gas bar, working in the Band office), at the age of 26, Tanya decided to enroll in upgrading in 1989,

> because I didn't want to just be a secretary with no education. I wanted to do something for my kids. I didn't want them growing up like how I grew up: nothing to eat and poorly dressed.

Linda

While Linda was unable to grant an interview, she did fill out a questionnaire. In 1989, Linda was a 20-year-old single mother, living at home with her parents and her children, two and four years old.

Linda completed grade seven in public school but dropped out "because I had too many family problems". She waited for six years before she decided to continue her education.

> I had a chance to go back to school and I wasn't going to let anything stop me because I wanted to get a higher grade so I could get a good job. One of the things that really kept me going was my kids — knowing that if I completed the course my kids would be proud of me and I would be proud of myself because people that weren't in my condition couldn't complete it.

Janet

When she was in AAUP in 1989, Janet was an extremely shy, introspective 20-year-old married woman with two young children. She completed grade eight in the public school system, but had to drop out because of pregnancy. Four years later, she decided to continue her education because "I needed to get a good paying job so I can get my kids everything they want and need".

On Being a Woman

My Life

Being a victim of something can be quite scary
Like one is falling off the edge of a cliff
The atmosphere around me seems so gloomy
The loneliness inside of me is so unbearable.
My dreams, hopes for the future seem to slip away
Like leaves falling to the ground
Why must I allow such things to destroy...
what's left of me, tearing me apart

Into tiny, little pieces
I know there's a solution — the step is up to me
To stand tall and be strong, to overcome this
disaster.
Let it be one day, the terror that's haunting me
deep within will soon diminish.
At last I will be free like a bird
flying
high in the sky.

—Phoenix

In their questionnaire responses, most women were reluctant to say that men and women were different; they all claimed that each *individual* was different. However, in interviews, most of the women were able to articulate answers to the question, "What's it like to be a woman on the reserve?"

The attitude of Blue Stone's husband seems to be typical of many men on the reserve. He believed it was his job as the husband to support and provide for his family, and that his wife did not need more schooling or to find a job. "Whatever he says, it had to go, because he was the boss." Her husband told her to stay at home and babysit and let the young people go to school. He thought his wife should give the young people a chance to get educated and that his wife should help them by looking after the grandchildren. "My old man used to say, 'You can't go to school. You can't learn nothing'."

According to Tracey, for the majority of the women on the reserve, getting married and having a man and baby are all there is to life. Entrenched traditional gender roles dictate that they stay at home and take care of their children and husbands. She says that in historical times, Medicine Women and Holy Women had their own sweat lodges, but in modern times, women are not respected, despite the fact that elders say, "A woman is strong, has backbone and should be respected."

Cassandra agrees that many women are traditional and are content to let things happen. Men say, "Stay at home, cook, look after my children: be a cavewoman." Moon believes that men have the traditional "boss" role at home and Tanya says that "men want to be the bosses. They want to be in control." According to Kim, men see women as "just talk. What's a woman going to know? All she ever does is cook and clean and have babies. They [men] haven't changed since the caveman days."

Blue Stone has survived a lifetime of abuse, living her life with concern for others as her first priority.

> Sometimes I think it depends on who you are, but it was hard for me. I just let people push me around, just like a slave. I have no right to say anything, I have no right to do anything, but now that's different 'cause the way that I lived wasn't normal.

At a time when Blue Stone was considering a divorce, she asked her mother to help her by watching the children while Blue Stone tried to get help or a place to stay. Her mother expressed the traditional view when she said, "No. You already have a lot of children. You can't break up your home." In Moon's experience, "the older people are really traditional. Stay home and raise your kids and let the man go work".

Blue Stone believes that on this reserve, most families are dysfunctional, coping with incest, rape and sexual abuse. Tanya says that most women are shy and believe that it is okay for their husbands to boss them around; that is just the way it is.

> Some women, they get beaten up and they say that's how it's supposed to be, like it's part of our tradition, but I don't think so. That's not part of our tradition — violence and abuse. I mean, women are supposed to look up to their husbands, cook for them, clean their clothes, but not in that kind of way — physical abuse.

Children of Abuse

He was
pleading to be recognized.
He would laugh
and his smile was like a ray
of sunshine.
Everyone who
gazed at him would
wonder, "Why does he
need so much attention?"
He would cry
in agony when he was alone, in the dark
unwelcoming night, in the small
enclosure. Any crumb of
affection meant the world to him. When she would
hug him and hold
him in front of her friends,
he was a rebel and he would deflect her show of
motherly ministrations. When
the company departed, the
payment for his display of
rebellion would commence.
The stairs would
begin to swim before
his eyes
as he lay there
unable to protect himself.
She would cry
with self-loathing,
begging him for his forgiveness.
Childhood is the time to be
carefree and enjoy life.

—Bonnie

Most of the women referred to the obsessive jealousy displayed by both men and women. Blue Stone stated that if a woman just talks to a man on the reserve, "already you're going with them". Tanya does not find it hard personally, but she mentioned that a lot of women are extremely jealous if their husbands talk to another woman. "You've got to kind of watch who you talk to and how you look and everything like that". When a woman goes back to school, her husband thinks that she is going to school to see or meet someone, and that is why they are getting dressed up. "The men feel threatened: they're afraid women will see something better and leave them" (Tracey). Similarly, Meeka says that the reason some of the men dropped out of AAUP was because of women. "Their wives were jealous there were women in the classroom."

For a woman who wants to get a job on the reserve, the opportunities are limited to "cleaning or working for the old people, cleaning houses, or else painting houses" (Meeka). Tracey believes that men have other options "if they want to work hard", while women really need an education if they want to get a good job. Cassandra also identifies the importance of education for women if they want to get a good job:

> Men have the option to make money right then and there. The jobs like carpentry, mechanics, and so on...are open first to men. Unless the woman has her certificate. A lot of men don't have to have their ticket to be in. If they've got it, they've got it. If a woman's got it, well, they've got to go to school to get it.

On this reserve, hiring for jobs is often based on family affiliation. When Blue Stone got her job at Counselling Services, many women told her she was lucky because her husband was on the Council.

> I didn't look at it that way. It was hard. I had to go to school and I had to do my own work. My husband couldn't do my work. The Chief or the Councillors didn't do my work. I did all that for myself and it's hard to stay sober. Nobody kept me sober. I kept myself sober. I like to think that I got the job because I worked for it, not because it was a favour.

Despite the gloomy picture for women on the reserve, Blue Stone and Moon, as working family counsellors, tell women who are abused that they have the ability to make choices. They do not have to put up with a bad situation; they have the power to make their own choices. If women tell her about how bad things are at home, Blue Stone says,

> the only way it's going to change is you're going to have to make choices. You keep on living like that, or if you want a better life, then it's up to you to do something. Nobody's going to come and do it for you.

With only a hint of humour, Tanya says that "the ladies are brighter. They're brighter than the men", and Blue Stone concurs, adding that "there are many really smart ladies on the reserve. Wouldn't that be nice if all the smart women can get in [elected to the Council]?" Kim, one of the youngest women interviewed, says,

> My mom says, "A woman follows a man." In my book, a woman doesn't follow a man, she walks alongside. I think that's where a lot of problems arise with these couples. I've noticed a few of the women working and the men at home [now]. Women go to bingo alone and the men stay home.

While she thinks that men have the traditional "boss" role at home, Moon sees more women working, going to school, and making choices. Tracey is pleased that more women over the age of 35 are returning to school and starting careers. With regard to women getting into traditionally male jobs in the trades, Meeka enthusiastically says, "Whether it's for themselves, or if they're just trying to prove something, it's good anyway".

Fighting traditional gender roles and expectations, physical, sexual and emotional abuse, spousal jealousy and limited job opportunities, where do these women find their strength?

> We women go through a lot. You think to yourself, "He's not going to stop me. I want to do something. If I don't do it, who's going to do it for me?" That's how a lot of women feel. They're very strong.

Along with Meeka, Blue Stone, who is also nearing her fiftieth year, believes that women who return to school are committed to completing the program because

> they know that there's nobody else going to do it for them. It's up to them to go out there and get what they want out of life. If they want a better future for their kids, they've got to go out there and be role models. They keep telling their kids, "Go to school", so if they see their mom going to school, they see that education is important.

Was AAUP Worthwhile?

When asked what they remember of the course content in upgrading, few of the women could be very specific. However, the algebra unit of the Math course made a lasting impression on Blue Stone:

> There was times I'd stay up even two hours just to solve one problem. I'd ask my daughter and she'd try to figure it out. One time I finally figured it out and I was real happy. I just yelled! I just don't like algebra 'cause I never figured I'd use it anyway.

Tracey said that her philosophy about Math was to "tolerate the teacher and just get it done". On the other hand, Tanya said that the Math she learned in AAUP prepared her well for the UCEP Math course she took in college the following year.

Natural

I once was a circle of natural beauty
My waters trickled purified
transparent like a midnight sky
Raising from the soil
Forests stretched endlessly
The air was a breath of freshness
healthy and safe for those
who inhaled it
Animals claimed their own habitats
Only fearful of their neighbouring
Predators
It was a moment of peaceful harmony.
Suddenly like lightning out of the sky
It came striking and breaking my natural features
My waters no longer purified
Are contaminated with toxics
You name it.
Forests disappearing left and right
Thus made into our writing utensils
Animals wander cautiously
Almost to extinction
The air filled with smog and

dangerous gases
From the so called Industrial
World
I keep yelling take care of me
for I am your soul possession
Someday when I cannot take the abuse —
no longer
I may repossess my only honour
Why can't the moment of peaceful harmony
Be brought back to the way it used
To Be.

— Tanya

Tanya "never liked Science. Honest, I never learned anything. I'd just study for the test and the test was over and I'd wipe everything from my mind", but for Meeka, the emphasis on environmental studies provoked serious thinking:

> Like today, now, I still think about it. Like if I empty, you know, bleach containers, I think about where am I, what am I going to do with these containers? Am I going to burn it up or what?

Environmental Studies also had an impact on Cassandra, and she remembers that

> it opened my eyes. What was going on. Bringing myself to reality rather than living in a bubble world. He [the teacher] talked about the fish and the water, something else to be cautious with, for you and your children.

In Tracey's questionnaire, she wrote that

> The program enabled me to restore study and work habits that are required of students. It enhanced or reinforced my English, written and vocabulary skills, knowledge of the world news; it improved my mathematical skills and also taught us how to prepare for further educational goals.

The only one who criticized the upgrading program was Kim, who said it was not worthwhile because "we were doing work that you do in grade seven or eight and how does that prepare you for college?" She enrolled in the program expecting it would prepare her for college but she mentioned that she was not taught how to write a persuasive or argumentative style of essay which was required on her skills appraisal test for college entrance. Meeka and Cassandra recalled reading stories about Indians and Tracey said that "my vocabulary, my language, was a low level because of the people I associate with. I went to school to get it back up there and now I'm back down there".

Memories of Social Studies were sketchy, but they all remembered studying different Indian leaders in Canadian history, and two of them remarked on how the interpretation of the Riel Rebellions differed from what they remember of high school Social Studies. Meeka

> learned maps. Louis Riel. Some of those...like Louis Riel. What I enjoyed about the Social Studies course was studying on the Indian people, even some that were extinct. I didn't know that. It really shocked me and got me thinking that there ought to be more Indians...I've read some books on my own about Black Elk, Crazy Horse, Sitting Bull.

Cassandra recalled feeling "queered out when [the teacher] said things I didn't know. I said, 'I'm embarrassed...What kind of Indian am I?'" Tanya mentioned that "my daughter was into that [studying Louis Riel] last year and she was asking me questions and I was able to answer them."

All of the women enjoyed the atmosphere of an adult classroom. Recalling her experience in high school, Meeka laughed as she said, "When you're an adult, you can tell the teacher, 'You're stupid yourself!'" Although there was a feeling of equality and the opportunity to question the instructors' methods and styles, she also remembered the respect that students and instructors had for each other and thought that some of the younger students learned to respect each other in the upgrading program.

Kim appreciated the fact that the instructors "treated you like you were a person, not just a number sitting out there". Linda enjoyed the teachers

> because it was easy talking to [them. They] were always there and knowing when I got to class that I would see [them] there; that also helped me through when the going got tough. [They] were there to guide me through and never gave up on me. That really helped.

Cassandra felt encouraged by the whole "school thing — the classes, being around other people. It was [a] real comfortable atmosphere, just freely saying what you thought."

The opportunity to be with other adults was a significant part of the upgrading experience for all the women:

> Socializing, meeting other people. Kids like socializing with other kids and adults are the same, I think. You can get out, you can talk to these people and laugh and have a good time. When you're at home you can't do that. In here [upgrading], you can say whatever you want (Kim).
>
> I was the stay-at-home type. Twenty-four hour mother. Getting out to school and being with friends all day and having a few minutes for coffee break...Some people I never talked to before, I started talking to them. You sit down and talk to them, laugh with them (Tracey).
>
> I enjoyed going to school. I got up every morning and looked forward to it. It was good to get out and be with other students. I learned to be more open I guess, to be friendly, to talk to people (Blue Stone).
>
> Even with the women on the reserve, sometimes it's hard to make friends. Going to school and staying in school, seeing them every day, you get to meet them...Getting out, doing things with other adults, you can enjoy yourself. You don't have to be a little kid to go on a field trip and have a good time. There's a little child in all of us (Meeka).
>
> You get to meet these people in class and find out what they're about too, and how they speak openly (Cassandra).

Personal Affective Outcomes

The women who were interviewed said they experienced significant personal changes as a result of attending AAUP. Most of them began the year with apprehension, and were extremely shy about voicing their opinions in class:

> It improved some. A little bit. Like now, I can talk to white people, whereas before, I couldn't. I was too shy. Here was this person from the bushes. She doesn't know what she wants...(Kim).

> I was terrified sitting in a classroom with other students, some younger than me. [I thought the teacher could] see what we're thinking, not like when I was a child. I was shy at first. [Now] I'm not afraid anymore to go back to school...I'm not shy to talk anymore, because of my age. I said to myself, "Why should I hold it back anymore?" (Meeka).
>
> I remember the first day and everybody got up and spoke their name. I didn't. I didn't stand up. I felt...it was the past that bothered me, 'cause all this shyness came back and I thought people would, you know, look me down, or laugh or something...That right there made me think, "Well, if I can't even get up and do that, I'm not going to last here." So then when two months passed by, I slowly started feeling better about the whole thing...People said what they thought, and I said to myself, "Well, if these people can say what they think, I'll say what I want." It did take a while (Cassandra).
>
> I was more confident in myself when I passed all the courses. I had a problem before. I was mostly shy and then when I talked, I sounded like I was going to cry (Tanya).
>
> I was more encouraged and satisfied with myself (Janet).
>
> I found out that I can learn and I really liked it...I never liked to ask for help because that's just the way I was over the years. But it's still hard sometimes [when] I have to go and ask for help. I find it really hard to do. I don't need anybody, but I realize now that I have to go out and ask for help...I feel better as a person, too. Before, I felt like those people from Africa, just sitting there waiting for someone to do something for them. I didn't like to ask for something...I hear a lot of people say around here, "I'm too old to learn!" and I say, "No you're not. The older you are, the smarter you get!" (Blue Stone).
>
> After returning to school as an adult, I found myself wanting to learn more and succeed in my personal goals. It was easier for me to relate to the younger people about education and the future (mine and theirs). It revived the energy and determination for me to proceed with my life and education (Tracey).

The pride of having accomplished the goal of "finishing something that I started, instead of quitting half way through" (Linda), was an important aspect of AAUP:

> That was a goal for me. I thought to myself, "If I can do it when I have children, it will be a lot better..." I just kept thinking to myself, when we started school that year, I thought I never finished nothing for such a long time and it would never have felt like I continued anything, and I want to finish this. Even though it was hard and I was pregnant, you know, I thought, well, if I can do it now, that's something worth going for (Cassandra).

> Returning to school as an adult makes me want more education. This way, I can get a good job. My schooling has changed my life, because I feel very proud of myself that I completed something and know when I want something, all I have to do is go out and get it (Linda).

Two of the women who have since attended off-reserve, non-Native institutions, mentioned that an all-Native classroom on the reserve is not necessarily conducive to freedom of expression:

> I found it easier to answer in front of a bunch of different faces than faces you knew — your own people. I think with white people, you can state your opinions and stuff without them really getting mad at you, but it's hard around Indian society. You try to say what you think or what you want to do, and some people get mad at you. That happens around here. They even fight over things like that. It's kind of scary. Even if you try to improve or get yourself better, people want to bring you down (Tanya).

> Like if you said something wrong, they [Native people on the reserve] would laugh at you. Not knowing those people at the time, I was on the outside looking in (Kim).

However, 46-year-old Meeka was encouraged by AAUP's potential for healing the Native community:

> What was important to me, was seeing everybody in class every day, including the men, and you know, not sitting there listening, but saying what they have to say and what they feel. I think that's really important for a reserve because if everybody lived up to that, you know, I think the reserve would be a better place to live. I know sometimes in other classes or in other things, they just horse around, but in our class, I don't remember too much horsing around. And having respect for one another. I think that's what the problem was. So many of these young people have no respect for anyone.

Gender Differences in the Classroom

Several women also remembered feeling restrained at first because of the presence of men in the classroom:

> When the women talked, they'd [the men] kind of crack a joke or something. It was [like that] for me. Cracks and jokes but it didn't bother me (Cassandra).
>
> Just because they were men, they figured they knew more. They're smart; they know everything. But I don't think so. Because they think they're smart, they didn't come to school. They didn't think they had to be there every day (Blue Stone).

As for the reasons that men were not as successful in AAUP as the women, Tanya theorized that

> they seem to have a harder time learning, but I think that's how it is. And there are some men that are just plain lazy. I mean, they don't want to learn, or they don't want to take that step, or they're scared.

Blue Stone suggested that the men dropped out of upgrading because "they figured they didn't need more school, or they like to put things off". Without hesitation, Meeka said that "most of them were not serious, and some of them [only] went because they had to do something to quit drinking. They realized that they couldn't do both, so some of them chose to drink". Cassandra's assessment was that

> we didn't have that many men in our class. They were quiet. I think so. I really do. Even some of the men I'd talk to in class, they'd say they don't need it or whatever. I think it's just another way of escaping from the fact that men and women are in the same class and they felt like the man-type thing. The way I see it is, the men can go and get the job, you know, and they don't need as much as a woman needs. That guy was pretty smart, eh? That John? He seemed to be. He talked like he...he talked every day, you know; he'd say smart words. "I can get in the truck; I don't need school. I got a job." Sure you got a job. I think he lasted a year. Now I don't know what he's doing...

Effect on the Family

The impact of their experience in upgrading was felt by the women's families. For the most part, AAUP was a positive experience, which resulted in a renewed understanding of the importance of education.

> When I went back to school, I figured that my grandchildren would see me going to school and when I tell them, "Go to school; education's important", then they realize that because they see me. I tell the grandchildren that they should go to school. Finishing grade twelve, that's not the end. There's still college and university if you want to have a good future, to be independent. Being independent makes a person feel good (Blue Stone).
>
> I want her [her daughter] to finish school. I want her to know the importance of education. I want her to feel important for who she is. I'd just like a lot of things to happen to her that didn't happen to me, and I'd really like her to finish high school (Moon).
>
> Compared to most men around here, he's [her husband] very supportive. I kept talking to him, telling him to go back [to school] and he wanted to, but he said he wasn't smart enough, and I told him, "That will come in time. That's how I felt too, but once you get into it, and you're committed to it, you'll do okay." [The children say], "You gonna get up and go to school, dad?" They come and get him up early in the morning. I told them, when I was young, I didn't finish. I want you kids to finish. I told them I went back to school to try to get a better education. They know about careers and stuff because they take it up in school now. So when I explain it to them, they understand it and they're really supportive and they understand it (Tanya).
>
> During the upgrading program, my children were proud of me going back to school so in a sense I was a role model for them. [The children] were excited for me. They liked the idea of me going back to school. Sitting at the table together doing our homework, [they'd say], "Hey, mom! I did this at school." Being a full-time student required both physical and mental concentration, which meant changing my lifestyle, [but] if you want to accomplish something, you have to sacrifice certain things (Tracey).
>
> Sure, they [her children] made fun of me and said, "Why, at your age, do you want to go back to school?" And I said, "Because I want to learn."

> And then when it was time to go to school, I was trying to back out and everybody said, "Mom, GO!" And then when I drank, sometimes for a week, they'd get after me and scold me. I think they learned that school was important, but I felt like I was neglecting [them] because I was in school all day and come home and I'd be so tired. I'm always thinking about them. I never used to think, "What about me?" And now, since I've been to [rehabilitation], I was thinking about me. I'm a person too. I'm important; if not for me, nothing will function (Meeka).

> I want to show the children that their mom can do it and they'll be encouraged and I can encourage them whenever they're having hard times. And I want to be able to help them with school work, you know? I felt bad my mom couldn't help me when I was young; I don't blame her...Things happen and things go on and I thought to myself, well, if I ever want to do that, pull my kids out of school, I want to have a little bit of teaching to teach them good enough for a few years...I want them to know that they can count on me for learning. I know school is important to me. It's important for me to learn, and there's lots of reasons: for me, for my family, for their education, as well as for mine (Cassandra).

Since their experience in AAUP in 1988 or 1989, some of the women have continued their education in other institutions, some have returned to school in 1992 after taking time off to look after young children, and all have plans to pursue specific educational and career goals.

Educational/Career Goals

After finishing the upgrading program on the reserve, Meeka enrolled in another program in a nearby town, but due to conflicts with instructors, difficulties in commuting back and forth to school, and a heavy course load, she dropped out after nine months. Since then, she has been staying at home but has been thinking about more schooling. "I'd like to do something not too long. Beauty culture or bicycle repairs; maybe I'd even take more English." In a telephone conversation, she said that if she had a car, she would enroll in a painting class or take a sewing class. Meeka still has plans to move off the reserve and find a job, as soon as all of her children decide on their futures.

Moon says,

> I miss school. I do plan to go back for sure in the next Social Work program. I *do* know that I'm going to go back to school. I'm just waiting for the babies to be a little older. I've kicked myself so many times 'cause I had the chance to enter that program four years ago and then two years ago. Twice I had a chance to go. Then I had another baby.

Moon has been accepted into a two-year transfer program, but there is no funding available. However, she is sure that that is what she wants to do and will work out the funding somehow for September, 1993. She will be 35 after a four year degree in Social Work and knows she "likes to work with people in the helping profession — with Native women."

Blue Stone "felt kind of tired and I just figured I'd stay home for a while and this job opening came up. I wasn't sure but I thought I'd take a chance." While working full-time as a counsellor at the Band Counselling Services office, Blue Stone has been working towards her Advanced Counsellor Training certificate, as well as taking English 20 and another Life Skills course. Initially, she had enrolled in AAUP to get some kind of training to become a counsellor. She plans to complete a two-year program in Social Work, but does not want to be a social worker; she wants to continue working as a family counsellor on the reserve. "If I don't do more training, I could work here until I'm sixty-five, but I want something exciting, something different."

After completing upgrading on the reserve in 1990, Tanya finished UCEP in a community college and went on to finish her first year of courses required for an accounting diploma at another college. She is taking this year off to stay at home, and hopes to continue in the spring of 1993. It is a two-year program and after she gets her diploma, she hopes to get a job as an accounting clerk or even set up her own business to do bookkeeping for small firms. In the meantime, she is working as a teacher's aide in the Band's elementary school, working with a special needs student.

Before the end of the school year in 1990, Cassandra gave birth to a baby, but less than two weeks later, she was back in class with the newborn, and was able to finish the course and graduate with the rest of her class. For the next two years, Cassandra took time off to care for her new baby. She does not regret being unable to continue her education immediately, because her family is very important to her. "I want to make sure of something before I do it", and when the program was over,

> I was almost scared to go back somewhere else, because I didn't feel I was ready, because of my Math. But now, the way I look at it is, I'd like to do it for myself, go back, get what I need, study...

She wants to get the education she needs to work in the Health Station on the reserve, although she is not sure exactly what she wants to do. She is interested in a career as a dental hygienist: "something minor, but something big, you know what I mean?" Her husband will need to go off the reserve to finish his education and Cassandra may be able to enroll in a UCEP program at the same institution. Her four young children are her first priority; if that means putting her plans on hold for a while, she is quite willing to do that. She has a goal firmly in mind, so however long it takes, she will accomplish it. In order to refresh her math and English skills, she enrolled in AAUP again in the fall of 1992.

Tracey was accepted at Grant MacEwan Community College (GMCC) after completing the upgrading program in 1990, but due to her husband's failing health, she decided to put her plans on hold and stay home for a year. In September, 1992, she was offered a full-time job in the Health Station on the reserve which she held until she was scheduled to begin an upgrading/carpentry course, also offered on the reserve. She is still considering the Native Studies program at university, but will have to complete English 30 before being accepted. She wants something other than a traditional "woman's job", such as clerk or secretary.

After taking three years off to stay at home with her young son, Kim is currently enrolled in another upgrading program off the reserve and is working towards a high school diploma over the next two years. She is interested in a career in corrections, hoping to get a job in probation or as a guard in a jail. She is also considering a career as a counsellor of AIDS patients. She hopes to finish the necessary schooling in four years, at which time she will be 29 years old.

In 1992, Linda hoped to enroll in AAUP again, to continue her education, but felt that with a five-month-old baby it would be better stay at home with her four children. She is committed to finishing her schooling in the near future.

Upon completing AAUP in 1990, Janet first worked at the reserve's golf course and then got a full-time job at the Band's Day Care Centre during the winter. When she got pregnant with her third child, Janet quit her job and stayed home until September, 1992, when both she and her husband were accepted into AAUP. She is still unsure about career plans for herself, but her husband wants to train for work in a nearby power plant.

In her final essay exam for AAUP, Tracey wrote about Native women, and it seems appropriate to end this section with her opinion:

> Over the past ten years, Native women have begun to change their perception of themselves and their role in the family and society. No longer are Native women sitting at home raising the children while the men are out in the workforce earning what they can to support their families.
>
> [Women] have realized they can help support a family instead of relying on the males. Furthermore, as an individual, there are needs of fulfilling an ambition or desire to be more than a mother and maid. Being discriminated [against] as being inferior to men over the past hundreds of years, has made Native women more determined to be able to accomplish what they were not expected to do...
>
> Not only do they see themselves as mothers, teachers, and the guiding hand in rearing a family, but as individuals who can accomplish all this and at the same time contribute their skills and knowledge in the work field and society. Native women no longer see themselves as the hard-working, obedient, and passive women of the past. They are letting society know they have the [same] rights and freedoms as their male counterparts in establishing themselves as parents and members of their community...Many women are returning to school or training programs...

> Native women [used to] perceive a picture of themselves as quiet, passive, obedient, and not to mention the mentor of the family. This did not mean she was the decision maker, although she was responsible for all the mistakes and errors in raising little Johnny. Through determination and the necessity of being accepted as a person, Native women have taken steps to prove their individuality...Their perception of themselves in the family role has gone through a drastic change. Many Native women have been inspired by other Natives or by the education they received [and] realiz[e] that you can have both a career and family. Being Indian didn't mean she couldn't have both.

Conclusion

The experience in an on-reserve upgrading program has had a lasting impact on these ten women. Not only have they undergone significant personal growth as a result, but they are determined to instill an understanding of the importance of education in their children and other family members.

Memories of AAUP do not focus on procedural knowledge; rather, these women remember the atmosphere of respect in an adult classroom, and the opportunity they have had to prove to themselves that they can finish what they start: "It's only the first part, but the first part is the hardest for what you want to accomplish. The first step. After that, it gets a little better" (Cassandra). Details of course material have faded quickly, but the importance of socializing with other adults remains a special memory.

Working within their own timelines, these women still have plans to continue their education, perhaps not according to the non-Native continuum, but when the time is right for *them.*

Their comments and the meaning they attach to their upgrading experience will be analyzed in Chapter Four. Conclusions and implications for educators will provide suggestions for much-needed changes in adult Native education.

CHAPTER 4

ALIGNING OUR PERCEPTIONS

Introduction

After the second year as an English instructor in an upgrading program on a reserve, I felt entirely ineffectual. In my opinion, the program was failing to meet the needs of the students, and as an instructor, I was not making a difference. As each graduating class proudly marched across the stage to receive a certificate of completion, I asked myself how worthwhile the experience had been for any of us: the students, the instructors, the administrators of the affiliated college and the Chief and Council of the reserve.

After some years of reflection, I realized that all the participants had had different goals and objectives and that perhaps the criteria I had been using to evaluate AAUP were inadequate and ethnocentric. Perhaps my definition of success was completely different than that of the students. Thus, an examination of the upgrading experience from the *students'* perspective was indicated, in order to determine whether my perception of what had occurred was fallacious or accurate.

A summary of the study — its purpose, focus, sample, and major conclusion — will be followed by a discussion of the goals and objectives of AAUP from the perspective of the instructors, administrators and Band leaders. I propose to contrast these with the meanings and perceptions of AAUP from the perspective of the women whom I interviewed. Based on analysis of the data presented in Chapter 3, it will become clear that the participants of AAUP attached different meanings to the term *successful* *completion.* Despite the fact that most women did not continue their education immediately upon graduating from the upgrading program, their experience in AAUP proved to be meaningful in ways other than the mastering of academic skills.

Summary of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine the value of an upgrading program on a reserve from the Native woman's perspective. I wanted to discover how the women feel about their experience in AAUP, whether they have experienced any personal growth as a result of attending an upgrading class for one year, and how they feel about the direction their lives have taken since completing AAUP. As an instructor in that program for two years, I had come to believe that the academic achievement of these women was secondary in importance to the personal affective outcomes.

The study focussed on the twenty women who were enrolled in AAUP on the reserve in 1988/89 and 1989/90. While an effort was made to contact all the women, I was able to speak to a total of only fourteen. Of those whom I approached about my research, seven agreed to participate by granting interviews. Three other women provided information through questionnaires and/or personal communication but were unavailable for interviews. At the time they attended upgrading classes, the women ranged in age from 21 to 46 years old. They all had children living at home and were either married, divorced, widowed, single, or involved in long-term common-law relationships.

In interviews, the participants talked about their experiences in the public school system and why they had not completed their education. They were asked to explain why they decided to return to school as adults and to comment on some of the difficulties they encountered in the classroom and in their family relationships as a result of their decision to upgrade their academic skills. I asked them to consider the differences between men and women on the reserve as well as in the classroom. In addition, the women tried to recall specifics of what they had learned in Science, Math, English and Social Studies, and then responded to the question, "Was AAUP valuable or worthwhile?" I questioned them about personal changes that may have occurred, as well as the impact that continuing their education may have had on their families. Each interview was concluded by a discussion of the women's educational and career goals.

As themes began to emerge from the data, the women confirmed or corrected my findings at various stages of the analysis process. The major conclusion of this study confirmed my original hypothesis: their upgrading experience was worthwhile for reasons other than academic achievement, in spite of the fact that many gave occupational opportunities as their reason for upgrading. While the instructors, administrators and Band leaders were discouraged because so few of the women continued their post-secondary education after completing AAUP, the women felt that upgrading had been a positive learning experience in terms of personal growth and the opportunity to socialize with other adults.

Analysis and Conclusions

The Instructors

From the instructors' perspective, the purpose of AAUP was to prepare the students for the University and College Entrance Program (UCEP) or other college programs off the reserve. Without formal guidelines to structure the content, the instructors were left to draw on their own backgrounds as teachers in the public school system in order to create a syllabus for each course. Aware of the need to present the students with the body of knowledge that every college assumes its students possess upon entry, the AAUP instructors endeavoured to bridge the learning gap for Natives who had only acquired this *knowledge* to the junior high school level. There was so much they *needed* to know before attempting college courses: familiarity with literary terms and genres; grammar and sentence structure; various essay styles; *important* people and events in Canadian and world history; an understanding of democracy; geographical names, places, and terms; the scientific method and algebraic formulae. The AAUP courses were based on the anglo-Canadian, middle-class philosophy of what constitutes the knowledge base for an educated citizen, because the instructors were cognizant of the requirements and expectations of the mainstream colleges where the students were supposedly headed.

Along with this non-Native, middle-class view of knowledge, the instructors evaluated student progress and performance regularly, using the same tools they had employed in the public school system: tests, quizzes, assignments, and exams to show the students' understanding of the course content. Students who did not achieve 50% or higher in Math and English were considered *unsuccessful* and for these students, the instructors naturally felt that the program had been a negative experience and a waste of time. Using the same objective standards of measurement, even those students who achieved high marks, but who chose to return to the same lifestyle rather than continuing their education or obtaining a better job, did not appear to have benefitted from their upgrading experience.

The Administrators

The college which had originally approached the Chief and Council with regard to establishing adult education on this reserve, had done so because of the appallingly low levels of education among Band members and the extreme economic hardship of the reserve. It was thought that by encouraging the adults to pursue post-secondary education, more Band members would be able to find employment and better support their families, bringing new life to the reserve.

What did the administrators consider to be a successful program? Not being involved with the students on a daily basis, they evaluated AAUP according to the number of students who began the program in September and the number who *were still there* in May. Was it cost effective? Did the number of graduates justify the expense of providing instructors, materials and equipment? In addition to these statistics, administrators considered the number of AAUP graduates who enrolled in further courses in off-reserve institutions the following year, as well as the number of students who were able to find gainful employment as a result of their upgrading experience. How many were making a contribution to the reserve? Was AAUP making any difference?

The Chief and Council

In a similar way, the community leaders realized that unless adult Band members received further education, the economic situation on the reserve would never change. They saw AAUP as a stepping stone for the students to obtain employment. Also, they understood the need for positive role models for the young people of the reserve; seeing their parents, uncles, brothers, and cousins going to school as adults would hopefully encourage more children to stay in school.

How did the Chief and Council evaluate the success of the upgrading program? They, too, looked at the statistics, to see whether the number of students completing the program justified the enormous financial commitment they were making to support adult education on the reserve. They were not as concerned with what the students were learning as they were with how many people accepted places in AAUP and continued the program until it was finished.

The major funding source for AAUP, Canada Employment and Immigration Commission (CEIC), allotted a specific number of "seats" each fall, and carefully monitored the students' attendance to see whether the federal funds were being "wasted" on people who could not be bothered to make a commitment to school. Based on the number of graduates, CEIC would either increase or decrease the number of "seats" it was willing to fund in the next school year. Again, the federal government agency was not as concerned with what was going on in the classroom, as it was with how many bodies were occupying seats at the end of the year. Students who were forced to withdraw from the program obviously did not *appreciate* the opportunity to go to school, and even those whose academic achievement and commitment were noteworthy were not congratulated bodies were occupying seats at the end of the year. Students who were forced to withdraw from the program obviously did not *appreciate* the opportunity to go to school, and even those whose academic achievement and commitment were noteworthy were not congratulated on their dedication, but were thought of in terms of how many more months of funding were available to them in other institutions, and whether they still met their eligibility requirements.

The Students

School
Goals, Plans
Learning, Studying, Graduating
Determining Our Own Destiny
Upgrading

— Blue Stone

How valuable was AAUP to the students? How did the *women* decide whether the upgrading course was worthwhile for them? Because they had all been exposed to the public school *system*, and knew that the marks they received in AAUP gave them value in terms of graduating, to a certain extent, the women obviously engaged in the same evaluative procedures as the instructors and administrators. However, two or three years after they had finished the program, how did they evaluate the experience?

Using the quantitative measures utilized by the instructors, administrators, CEIC, and the Chief and Council, how can the impact of AAUP on the individual, her family, and her community be evaluated accurately? Only by talking to the women themselves is it possible to understand how AAUP affected and influenced their lives. Only by analyzing their own words, feelings, perceptions and meanings can we really comprehend the changes that occurred in the women, their families, and their community.

Personal Agendas

After talking to the women involved in this study, it seems clear that their expectations and personal goals differed from those of the other participants in AAUP. Perhaps they initially shared the same "goals" of education, but now they look back on their upgrading experience with a different meaning. To some, just finishing something that they started was an important goal, and after attending school regularly for ten months, they felt pride and a sense of accomplishment. This was a positive step in their growth as their self-esteem increased markedly.

Coming to an understanding that they were never too old to learn, or that they enjoyed the challenge of learning new things, was a significant aspect of their personal growth. Being given encouragement to express their opinions and being exposed to an environment where tolerance of differences was encouraged, enabled them to become more self-confident, able to articulate their feelings and thoughts.

The women enjoyed the routine of school life, learning the importance of deadlines, cooperation, planning, study and work habits, which could only improve their situations as homemakers or prepare them to better cope with employment.

With the demands of small children, financial difficulties and relationship problems at home, the women appreciated being able to "escape" their everyday lives for six hours a day, socializing with other adults, meeting new people and establishing friendships with those with whom they had previously only a passing acquaintance. To them, the actual course content was not as significant as the atmosphere of trust and security provided in the upgrading classroom.

Their Families

The Snowball

Squeals of laughter
Fill the air

Bundled in yards
of wool and pile
that robbed the rainbow
of every color
Children playing
Games of war
Rosy cheeked snowmen
Don't feel the cold
Snowballs flying like missiles
falling short of their target
Exhausted little soldiers
seek refuge behind forts of snow
No one size is chosen for this war
Everyone here has come on his own
Happiness overflows like
a mad river pouring its contents
in places unknown
The Childhood in me returns
hit for a moment
The carefully aimed ball of snow brought me back
Back to a world only adults know.

Play children play
If only you knew
tomorrow is forever.

—Tracey

In addition to their personal agendas, the women who attended AAUP affected and influenced their extended families. Having learned communication and problem solving strategies in Counselling classes, wives were better able to handle marital stress and parenting concerns. Maybe Tanya hated Science and forgot everything she learned as soon as she had written a test, but if she was able to communicate with her husband more effectively as a result of her experience in AAUP, it was certainly worthwhile. Learning that it was acceptable to express their opinions and stand up for themselves in class, some of the women gained the courage to end dysfunctional relationships. After they had graduated, Tanya, Moon and Janet encouraged their husbands to enroll in upgrading, and all three men are in the 1992 class.

All of the women interviewed mentioned that they felt they were positive role models for their children because they had returned to school. Tracey, Tanya, Kim, Cassandra, Moon, Meeka and Blue Stone became more involved in their children's (and grandchildren's) schooling, taking an active interest in what they were learning, and not being afraid to question teachers or principals about their children's progress. After a year in AAUP, these women were convinced of the need for education, and want their children to finish high school when they are young, hoping to spare them the hardships that their mothers have had to endure because of early drop outs.

When a mother returned to school, the entire family was involved in the decision, including parents and in-laws. Kim's mother cared for her grandchild when his mother was in school, and encouraged Kim to complete the program even when she felt like quitting. Four years later, when Kim enrolled in another upgrading program, she convinced her sister to join her after being out of school for almost 30 years. While Moon's mother criticized her for leaving her children to return to school, in 1992, Moon was thrilled when her mother enrolled in the upgrading/carpentry course. Because AAUP was a positive experience for these women, they have been able to influence other family members to return to school. On January 10, 1989, Phoenix wrote in her journal,

> This month I have to try to find another babysitter. My sister-in-law is babysitting for now but she plans on going back to school in February. She's in grade eleven. I feel so happy for her because she decided to go back. I keep talking to her, telling her that she'll end up with nothing if she doesn't get her education. I know there are a lot of opportunities out there for her. It will be entirely up to her to make these decisions for herself. No one can do it for her, so she has to get on the ball and look at life more seriously.

The Community

AAUP offered an important forum to begin the healing process on a reserve long-troubled with family feuds, nepotism, and dysfunctional families. In the classroom, the students learned to respect each other, to support and help each other and to get to know each other better. Talking over coffee or participating in class discussions about issues important to them, and really listening to each other, was an important step in learning new ways to solve problems.

The women who attended AAUP on the reserve have been positive role models in the community also. Other adults who have lived in despair of ever having a different life are influenced by the changes that are apparent in these women: not only the personal changes, but also the difference in the way they treat their families, and their ability to hold full-time jobs, or to succeed in other institutions off the reserve. These other adults believe that upgrading helped these women to make positive changes in their lifestyles, and as result, each year the number of applicants for AAUP increases well beyond the number of places available for new students. After five years on the reserve, AAUP has made a positive impact on the community; beginning with the adults enrolled in the program, the value of education has trickled through the reserve, right down to the smallest child enrolled in pre-school. It is not because of the content of the English course or the presumed facility with numeric equations, but because of the personal changes and growth that are evident in all the students (especially the women) who have been exposed to adult education.

Community development begins with the individual and spreads outward, and it is this process which can serve to legitimate adult upgrading programs for administrators on a reserve. The positive influence that a woman has on her own family as a result of completing an adult educational program will have far-reaching effects on the health and well-being of the entire community. Adults who return to school become more involved in their children's education, and just as immigrant parents insist that their children receive more education than they have had themselves, Native parents are beginning to understand the importance of education for their children's survival in the next century.

Implications for Adult Native Education

Very few reserves in Alberta can ever hope to be economically self-sufficient and most Native leaders realize the need to prepare Band members for inevitable association with non-Native society. Beginning in the elementary school, educators are preparing Native children with education for the 21st century, incorporating Indian culture, history, traditions and spirituality with instruction in computers, math, science, and technology. Bourdeaux (1979) suggests that "Indian education should be culturally pluralistic so that Indian students can function in both cultures" (cited in Hurlburt et al. 1990:13). The need for cross-over skills is articulated by Beatrice Medicine (1987:24):

> Sitting Bull of the Hunkpapa band of the Lakota said, "Take the best from both worlds." That is a very powerful mandate. The best from the Native world is to be a Native person. The best from the white world is the education system— because many Natives cannot function effectively any longer without an education. They must have an education to make a living. They must have trained teachers, trained school boards, and trained professors to train teachers. They have to learn to read, write, and speak properly. They must know how to deal with the media and how to live in a highly technological society. They must be cognizant of the dominant society in which resides all the power to make decisions that affect their lives. Essentially, Natives have been educated to a Native mode. They must be aware of the non-Native mode so that they can make a better life for themselves and their children.

According to Carney, "with the signing of Treaties 6, 7, and 8...the educational focus shifted from the adult to the child", and for almost 100 years, the education of adult Natives was restricted to short-term job training or home-making courses. Now that Indian leaders and government departments have realized the necessity of addressing the low levels of education among Canada's adult Natives, post-secondary opportunities have become more accessible to future Native professionals. As Hull concluded in his 1990 study of Native socioeconomic status, "assistance to Indian parents which improves their income, training, and employment is likely to result in improved educational success for their children" (11). Validated by the women interviewed for my research, mothers who pursue their education as adults are more involved in their children's schooling, and quite determined to encourage them to stay in school. The long-term effects of reaching the adults with the message that education is important, are obvious.

"Education programs for disadvantaged adults should consider the students as central figures in their design" (Read 1983:19); rather than imposing a standard curriculum on Native upgrading program, educators should consider the gender restraints inherent in a traditional Native community, the vital need for an environment of trust and security, the priority given to child care, and the need for support and counselling of women who may be facing abuse in the home.

The women interviewed for this study emphasized the need for career counselling as a prerequisite for student success:

> It's like this. A lot of the women drop out of school when they're fourteen, fifteen, grade 6, 7 level. They go to upgrading. Sure, they get good marks but when they actually go to college or something or training or something, it's not all there for them, they don't have everything...They need more Life Skills, counselling, guidance counselling, to kind of direct them. Sure they can go to school out there and have a good mark in English and Math and Science and all of a sudden I'm chucked out there to do an appraisal test for university. What am I going to university for? What do I want?...If I quit school in grade 7 or grade 8 at a time of my life where I want to be a doctor, I want to be a painter or something and I quit school all those are gone. So now I'm grown, I'm taking upgrading classes, what do I want to be? I don't want to be a painter anymore. I want to be a nurse's aide or something, so what do I need? That's how come you never see Indian doctors, maybe one out of a million. You don't see Indian airplane pilots, you don't see Indian dentists, Indian doctors. They just stick to janitor or social worker, [or] probation officer. (Tracey)

> I feel they don't get enough support. It could be the other half [spouse] or it could be the parents, it could be the school counsellor, it could be anyone around here. (Moon)
>
> The work with [the school counsellor], like the counseling, career counseling, it was kind of boring but I think [it was] important. People [have] got to know where they're going before they just jump into school. They [have] got to know where they're going. (Tanya)
>
> If I had talked to [the school counsellor] and told her all these things, maybe she could have helped me get into... further upgrading, but like I said, I never liked to ask because that's just the way I was over the years. (Blue Stone)

In proposing program objectives, Bouvier (1991:295) suggests that "two key considerations for any system or individual involved with Aboriginal people are, first, to know their aspirations, and second, to reflect this knowledge in the delivery of service". If program planners have an understanding of the expectations of the students prior to the beginning of the course, all participants can work together harmoniously to ensure the best results for the students, providing a service that meets their individual needs.

Educators must consider the economic status of the reserve in order to understand possible motivations for adults to return to school. If there are limited job opportunities in their home communities, perhaps adults enroll in an upgrading program for reasons other than upgrading their academic or job-readiness skills. Adults who do not want to leave the reserve to attend other institutions or seek employment, may have personal agendas which will not coincide with the objectives of the instructors and administrators who view the upgrading program as a college preparatory course. The emotional health of the community can also be a factor in determining the motivations of adult students on a reserve. Women in dysfunctional relationships need to learn self-esteem and self-confidence and certainly this is an important function of adult Native education. Perhaps their understanding of this need for personal growth influences their perception of

AAUP. A compromise is necessary to align the perceptions and fulfill the mandates of all the participants in an adult upgrading program.

While it is understood that opportunities for access to higher education should be available to Native adults, educators should be cautioned against focussing solely on academic outcomes. Of course upgrading programs should adequately prepare the students for success in non-Native colleges and universities by providing the expected fundamentals, but the value of the non-academic aspects of adult education should not be overlooked or disregarded by educators. Just as most people soon forget the content of their high school courses and remember the extra-curricular activities, dances, sports events and friendships, Native women who enroll in upgrading programs evaluate their experience in upgrading based on their personal growth and the impact it has had on their lives. Instructors and administrators must accept the importance of non-academic activities in adult classrooms, and give credence to interaction, communication, social events, and field trips as valid learning experiences, which, to the women, are often more important than textbook knowledge. As pedagogical experts have maintained, education should be aimed at the *whole* person, not just focussed on the cognitive aspects. Above all, the immediate needs of the women who have decided to continue their education, for whatever reason, need to be considered in the planning of any adult Native program.

Conclusion

In Chapter 1, I discussed the methodology and design of this research project, which was based on qualitative data collection. The next chapter surveyed some of the available literature on the education of women in developing countries, as well as in the Western world; selected androgogical research; and literature specific to Native education. I attempted to link these three bodies of research as a basis for this study about Native women's perception of an adult upgrading program on a reserve.

Using the women's own words as much as possible, in Chapter 3 I presented the data compiled from the interviews of seven women, in addition to questionnaire responses from two women who were unable to grant interviews. I also included poetry and an excerpt from an essay written by women when they were students in AAUP in 1988 and 1989.

An analysis of the data and implications for educators of adult Native women, concluded the thesis in Chapter 4. Based on the information obtained from the women who attended AAUP, it is clear that the upgrading experience was worthwhile, not because of academic achievement or because it was a valuable preparatory course for those who continued their education in other colleges, but because of the personal affective outcomes, the changes in their family relationships, and the impact on the entire community. While these women may not have achieved the goals expected of them by the instructors, the administrators, and the community leaders in quantitative terms, Tracey, Tanya, Kim, Cassandra, Meeka, Blue Stone, Moon, Janet and Linda assert whole-heartedly that going back to school is the best thing they have ever done for themselves and for their children. However, it seems appropriate to give the last word to Phoenix:

> Where I'll be the proudest is seeing myself graduate and going on to my next step towards my career. I know it's going to be a tough road to get where I'm going but I know I have a lot of determination in me. Once I get where I'm heading I hope to hold a steady job and be happy with my job. I want to be a role model for my children as well as other children...The thought of graduation makes me feel so good. Everyone receiving their diplomas with smiling faces. What an achievement! From there, we all have to go our separate ways, on to our next step to reaching our goal. I just hope some day in the future, we're all a success.

Finally, Phoenix, you have realized that you have *always* been more than just *good enough*.

Some Final Reflections

Reflecting on the research that I have completed, I still struggle with a mental dilemma as a teacher. Is it possible to maintain academic standards and expectations in an upgrading program in which the women clearly need nurturing and support in their personal growth? Is it necessary to dichotomize these two seemingly opposing objectives or can they coexist in a methodology and mandate in which nurturing and procedural knowledge complement each other?

For women with low self-esteem, who have only experienced failure in previous attempts at schooling, mastering a concrete skill that has value for them can be a positive step in changing the way they feel about themselves. Although the reason for studying algebra may not be clear or relevant to their present life situations, the thrill of finally grasping a difficult concept results in pride and a sense of accomplishment.

While the research for *Women's Ways of Knowing* (Belenky et al. 1986) posits that women value experiential knowledge— not the abstract, out-of-context learning that comes from books or words — it is unwise to draw from this the assumption that they do not value learning just for the sake of learning. Providing an academic context with clearly defined parameters offers the security of knowing what is expected and gives the women the opportunity to set personal goals which, when achieved, provide self-confidence and intrinsic rewards. An environment in which the women feel safe and which enables them to learn to express themselves and be heard is an important function of adult upgrading classrooms. However, an informal "coffee club" will not provide the validity or legitimization that both the women *and* the administrators require in a school situation. Even if they see Science or Social Studies as only having value to others (i.e. instructors and administrators), success in an academic context contributes to positive personal growth.

Nurturing and academic achievement are not mutually exclusive in adult education. An instructor can be a facilitator and guide for women struggling to find themselves, creating an atmosphere of trust, respect and cooperative learning, while at the same time encouraging the women to strive for attainable and worthwhile scholastic goals. Personal growth occurs concurrently with academic achievement; learning something that they did not think they could learn provides personal satisfaction and promotes healthy attitudes about the self.

There must be a balance. Returning to school after a twenty year absence is a frightening prospect and these women need support and encouragement in an on-reserve program. The dilemma for the instructor is that mainstream institutions still operate within a competitive, rigid educational structure. Because the women expect their instructors to prepare them for success should they decide to continue their schooling, focussing only on personal growth and nurturing in a protective environment on the reserve will lead to recriminations and frustration for all participants.

These interviews of my former students suggest a paradoxical element to Native women's educational goals. On the one hand, they say that they want an education in order to obtain a good job and to make a better life for their children. On the other hand, they are happy with education which provides other more personal and immediate rewards and which perhaps is a step on the path to a "better job". It is not that they disagree with the goals set by instructors and administrators — it is the timelines and the single-mindedness of the goals that seem to be rejected.

It is unfortunate that education is viewed as utilitarian, that unless it is *useful* in obtaining employment it is not worthwhile. What is wrong with helping a woman become a better mother and wife or a more confident *person*? Or enabling a woman to pursue a sometimes less than concrete career plan without imposing a linear path and absolute deadline? Providing educational opportunities is important; allowing the women to get what *they* want from an upgrading program, according to their own timeline, is vital.

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APPENDIX A

Contact Letter to Respondents

September 1, 1992

As you may already know, I am working on my Masters degree in Native education this year. I have finished all the courses and am now beginning my thesis.

I am interested in finding out how you feel about your experience in the adult upgrading program on the reserve, 1988-89 or 1989-90. The thesis will focus only on the women in the program because more women than men were able to complete the entire course of studies. I would really like to talk to each woman personally to find out if upgrading was a valuable experience, what you learned, and what you've been doing since you finished the program. Several of the women in our class have already helped me with my project and I have learned a great deal from their comments. Hopefully, as a result of your input, people who plan adult upgrading courses will have a better idea of what Native women expect and how they feel about enrolling in these programs.

If you are willing to help me, we will arrange a time that is convenient for you and I will come to the reserve to talk with you. Then, when I have written notes about what you have told me, we will get together again so you can read over what I have written, and make changes or suggestions to improve it. In the final report, your real name will not be used and the reserve will not be identified by name, location or recognizable features. If you agree to participate but then decide you are not able to continue or if you don't want your comments to be included in the research, at any time you just need to tell me and nothing that you have told me will be used in my report. There will be no hard feelings and I don't need any explanation.

I really hope I can talk to all the women in our class, but some have moved off the reserve now and some of you are very busy with jobs and families. However, if you can spare about an hour for me I would appreciate it if you could use the envelope I've enclosed to let me know. If possible, you can give me a call to let me know when it would be convenient to meet. I'm hoping to get together with as many women as I can in September and October (weekends included!)

It was fun to get caught up with some of my friends and former students at the August pow-wow and I hope to see the rest of you soon!

APPENDIX B

Questionnaire

1. Age______
2. Marital Status________________________________
3. Number of Dependent Children________
4. Their Ages______________________________________
5. Highest grade you completed in school: 7 8 9 10 11 12
6. Reason for leaving school early:

   ____

   ____

7. How long had you been out of school when you decided to upgrade?

   ____

8. Why did you decide to continue your education as an adult?

   ____

   ____

   ____

9. What did you LIKE about the upgrading program?

   ____

   ____

   ____

   What did you DISLIKE about the upgrading program?

   ____

   ____

   ____

10. Do you think the upgrading program was useful?

    ____

    Explain. ____

11. Would you have enrolled in upgrading if it had not been offered on the reserve?________Why/Why not?

12. What was the most difficult part about being a full-time student?

13. When did you finish the upgrading program?__________________________

14. What have you been doing since you finished the program?

15. What are your future plans (education/employment)?

16. Do you think it is easier for men or women to succeed in upgrading?

17. Have you noticed any changes in yourself as a person since you returned to school as an adult?____

18. Do you plan to stay on the reserve when you reach your educational goals?___________Why/Why not?___________________________________

____

____

____

19. In a paragraph, explain how you feel about your educational experiences, including elementary, junior/senior high school. Has your schooling affected your family? Is there a place for educated women in the Native community?

(Please use a separate piece of paper or write on the back of this page.)